

**THE EMPIRE OF FRENCH IMPERIAL ART: JACQUES-LOUIS
DAVID AND THE NAPOLEONIC REGIME, 1799 TO 1812**

A Senior Scholars Thesis

by

BRIAN CHRISTOPHER BAJEW

Submitted to the Office of Undergraduate Research
Texas A&M University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the designation as

UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH SCHOLAR

April 2010

Major: History

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Approved by:

Research Advisor:

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Stephen Caffey

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ABSTRACT

The Empire of French Imperial Art: Jacques-Louis David and the Napoleonic Regime,
1799 to 1812. (April 2010)

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This thesis deals with the relationship of art in Napoleonic France, with a specific focus of works glorifying Napoleon Bonaparte by Jacques-Louis David, Napoleon's official court painter. The central focus of each image is to understand the impact of David's paintings for the Napoleonic image, as well as the empire he constructed after seizing administrative control of France. Napoleon actively exploited the arts as a form of propaganda for his empire, the quintessential example of which are the works David painted of the emperor. Furthermore, before each analysis of a work, there is a brief history of Napoleon's actions in Europe, thus enabling the reader to better understand the context under which the painting is produced and the reasoning behind what David chooses to reveal in his works and what he decides to leave out, in order to fully propagandize Napoleon.

DEDICATION

For Mallory, my *beau ideal*.

Oh comrade, grant me one last prayer,
When death my hours shall number.
Carry my body back to France.
In French soil let me slumber.
My cross of the Legion with its scarlet band
Lay close to my heart for a neighbour
And place my carbine in my hand
And buckle on my sabre.

And over my grave shall the Emperor ride,
'Midst thunder of hoof-beats ascending,
Then armed to the teeth I shall ride from my grave!
My Emperor, my Emperor defending.

-John R. Elting
Col. USA, Ret.
1997

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

When I was 16 years old, I made the fateful decision to thumb through the pages of my world history textbook, upon which I came across an unfamiliar painting, David's *Napoleon Crossing the St. Bernard*. I was immediately captivated by the image's protagonist, Napoleon Bonaparte, and I knew from that point onward his life would become the focal point of my intellectual studies. I, too, have been swept away by the mythos of the Napoleonic image, entranced by this larger than life figure that accomplished such great feats of action in such a short period of time.

I find myself, several years later from my first encounter with Napoleon, completing the most important work of my academic career. Such an endeavor, however, is not without assistance. Through my personal experience, I have discovered that it is a rare event in which a student is able to discover a professor with the selflessness to place a students' interests above his or her own. Because of this, I am forever indebted to Dr. Stephen Caffey, who guided me through the entire process, going above and beyond his call of duty to ensure that I received all the necessary tools to execute this paper. Without his counsel, or backing for that matter, this paper would never have existed.

Thanks must be administered to Texas A&M University, who has awarded me the opportunity to write this paper, as well as to borrow their entire collection on Jacques-

Louis David without a complaint. I am grateful for the organization Artstor Inc., who has allowed me to provide my paper with images of fantastic quality, free of charge.

It would be unjust not to acknowledge my family and friends, who have supported me by having to endure my constant barrage of Napoleonic information. Thank you to my parents in particular, who were just as enthusiastic about my topic of choice as I was, without even having a deep knowledge of the subject material. I am also obliged to give many thanks to my grandfather, who would talk to me endlessly about history; I was fortunate enough to listen, even at such an early age.

Finally, I am thankful for Napoleon Bonaparte, whose epic life inspired a young man with his own ambitions.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION: THE LIFE OF JACQUES-LOUIS DAVID, FROM VIVE LA RÉVOLUTION TO VIVE L'EMPEREUR

Introduction

Jacques-Louis David (1748-1825), proclaimed by Eugène Delacroix to be “the father of the entire modern school” is often considered an enigma in the history of art.¹ David’s images during the French Revolution espoused the ideas of liberty and democracy, while his later works under the Napoleonic regime are the iconic symbols of autocratic rule. It remains to be settled whether he was a man who believed in the ideals of the tumultuous periods he engaged in, or simply an opportunist who seized advantage of the situations he discovered himself in. However, regardless of his political and ideological affiliations, his images are crucial in the development of the visual history of both the French Revolution and Napoleonic Empire.

It is the period of Napoleonic France that is the focus of this article. David’s paintings of the emperor are responsible for creating an iconography of Napoleon that presents him in deeply contrasting atmospheres, primarily that of an active politician interested in the well-being of his people versus a mythological, larger than life, being. David’s works of

This thesis follows the style of *French Historical Studies*.

¹ Dorothy Johnson, ed. *Jacques-Louis David: New Perspectives* (Newark: The University of Delaware Press, 2006) 35

Napoleon continue to serve the Napoleonic image up to the present, as generation after generation continue to be captivated by the Napoleonic figure. Therefore, what follows is analysis of four paintings, all executed by David, that are key in defining the Napoleonic image; in recognizing the similarities and differences of each progressive image, the perspective Napoleon viewed of himself was a transformation from military idol to deity. In order to understand how David came into the service of Napoleon, however, it is first necessary to chronicle the narrative of David's life and artistic development, to explain how two men with incredibly different careers would converge and, in their own respects, redefine history.

Jacques-Louis David

Jacques-Louis David was born an only child on August 30, 1748, to Louis-Maurice David and Marie-Geneviève Buron.² David's father, Louis, descended from a fairly successful family, and his mother had several family members with artistic talents, including François Boucher (1703-1770), who, for a time, served as first painter to the King. When he was nine years old, David's father was killed in a duel, and, shortly thereafter, his mother moved to Normandy, which left the young David in the care of his two uncles, Jacques Buron and Jacques Desmaysens.³ Buron and Desmaysens demanded that David acquire a classical education that would allow him to obtain a career in

² Luc de Nanteuil, *Jacques-Louis David* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Incorporated, 1985) 7

³ Ibid.

professional fields such as law and architecture, and as a result, was placed into the *Collège de Quatre Nations*.⁴

David was considered to be mediocre student in his early days of education, but this is largely due to the fact that David would spend a great deal of time drawing, instead of paying attention to his instructors.⁵ David's original training fell upon his relative, Boucher, who would eventually send David to the *Académie Royale de Peinture* to study under Joseph-Marie Vien (1716-1809) in 1764.⁶ Vien fiercely advocated that artists should study nature and seek to obtain a more natural light in one's work. One of Vien's greatest influences on David would be the desire to reference classical antiquity for "...moral inspiration and artistic purity..."⁷ Vien's studio became the heart for the future of a new generation of painters who, under Vien's instruction, specialized in "...art toward greater archaeological classicism."⁸ It is here, as an adolescent, that we begin to view the developmental stages of David's artistic identity, which would become the quintessential example of Neoclassicism.

In 1767, David executed his first major work, *Jupiter and Antiope* (fig. 1), and two years later David completed his first of a vast array of portraits, *Madame Buron* (fig. 2), a painting of his aunt. In 1774, after four previous failed attempts, David was awarded first

⁴ Thomas Crow, *Emulation: David, Drouais, and Girodet in the Art of Revolutionary France* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002) 5

⁵ de Nanteuil, 7

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Crow, 8

place in an Academy competition, the *Prix de Rome*, for his work, *Antiochus and Stratonica* (fig. 3). The submission was “...the first major work in which he manifested the special gifts upon which his reputation would eventually come to rest-vigor of composition and brilliance of colors...”⁹ The prize for his achievement was a three year study abroad program in Rome.

In 1775, David traveled to Rome with his mentor Vien to begin his study of Italian art; not expecting to be swayed by the enormous history of Italian art, David proclaimed prior to his departure, “Antiquity will not seduce me, it lacks warmth, and does not move.”¹⁰ However, upon arrival, David was at once entranced with Italy, for what it offered far surpassed that of anything David had learned in Paris; Rome came to represent the only authentic museum of classical art and sculpture, as the city lived and breathed it.¹¹ David became mesmerized by the Italian masters, primarily Caravaggio, Carracci, Titian, and especially Raphael; all of these men were masters of light, form, and color.¹² David realized the inexperience of his artistic repertoire when compared to these men, for as one scholar notes, “David was very depressed... for in the brilliant light of Rome, in the shade of those epic fragments, he realized that what he had accomplished in France was insupportably trivial.”¹³ It was clear that David still had much to learn if he was to achieve his full potential, but he absorbed as much of Italy as

⁹ de Nanteuil, 13

¹⁰ David Lloyd Dowd, *Pageant Master of the Republic: Jacques-Louis David and the French Revolution* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1948) 8

¹¹ de Nanteuil, 16

¹² Ibid., 17

¹³ Anita Brookner, *Jacques-Louis David* (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1980) 52

he could throughout the course of his visit, hoping to imbue his own works with the same compositional mastery of the Italian greats.

David left Rome for Paris in July of 1780, and in the 1781 Salon exhibited *Count Potocki* (fig. 4), *Belisarius Asking for Alms* (fig. 5), *Saint Roch Interceding for the Plague Victims* (fig. 6), and a sketch, titled *The Funeral of Patroclus* (fig. 7).¹⁴ David won large scale approval, from both the Academy and the public; shortly after the exhibition, David gained immense adoration throughout France, and through this popularity, as well as the assistance of a few friends and relatives, obtained a studio in the *Hôtel de Ville*, and along with a new studio, a line of students clamoring to obtain his instruction.¹⁵

In September of 1784, David returned to Rome, and in the presence of such overwhelming art history, David began to execute *Oath of the Horatii* (fig. 8), which he completed later in the year.¹⁶ *Horatii* would, in due time, become the first of multiple pre-1789 paintings that would come to serve the Revolution, for it spoke to the Revolutionaries on several levels, most importantly because it expressed a message of unification of the people. *Horatii* advocated to place the state above a person's own welfare, and to give themselves fully for the government, an idea that appealed largely to those who would, after July 14, 1789, would preach these very same beliefs.¹⁷

¹⁴ de Nanteuil, 18

¹⁵ Dowd, 13-14

¹⁶ de Nanteuil

¹⁷ Dowd, 23

Completed in 1787, David's *The Death of Socrates* (fig. 9) would echo similar principles to *Horatii*, namely the fact that it "... represents another father figure unjustly condemned but who sacrifices himself for an abstract principle," and "...the devotion to the governing authority despite its impossible demands, and transcendent patriotism..."¹⁸ In July of 1789, amid decades of frustration aimed at the monarchy, the people of France rose up in revolt. That same year, David completed and exhibited *The Lictors Bring Brutus the Bodies of his Sons* (fig. 10), which would assist in launching him into the inner circles of the Revolution.¹⁹ *Brutus* gained so much attention because of its main themes of destruction of the monarchy and loyalty to the government above all else, including family. *Brutus* is "...a distinctly Republican theme showing the first consul [Brutus] seated in his house when lictors return the sons who he himself condemned to death for treason."²⁰ It would appear that David's paintings, albeit unintentionally, nonetheless catered to the interpretations of the Revolutionaries flawlessly, recalling classical representations of the justifications to which the Revolution arose: to depose a corrupt and inefficient monarchy and institute Republicanism and democracy.

The ensuing revolution would spark David to break off all ties with the Academy and seek allegiance with the Jacobin Club, which commissioned David to paint *The Tennis Court Oath* (fig. 11) in June of 1790. David was now an integral factor in the progress

¹⁸ Ibid., 409

¹⁹ de Nanteuil, 25

²⁰ Albert Boime, *Art in an Age of Revolution, 1750-1800* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1987), 417

of the Revolution, as he was called forth to immortalize the peoples that sparked the political dissidence. It is entirely unknown exactly why it is that David chose the radical path of the Jacobinist Revolutionaries so quickly, however, the most appropriate theory posits his intense antagonism towards the Academy. As the Academy represented a microcosm of the *ancien régime*, it would appear only natural that David would support the ideals of a political faction which espoused the more democratic principles he wished to integrate into the Academy. For David, "...the statues of the arts under the old regime convinced him that the artists must be emancipated from the inequalities and abuses of the existing cultural institutions, and that art must take its rightful place in a new social order."²¹ However, scholars also theorize that David did not actually support the Revolution, but instead was an opportunist, and in the midst of a national revolution he saw the prospect to further his career; this theory appears all the more evident in the years following the Revolution, when David would paint for Napoleon, a man who came to personify the antithesis of the ideals promoted during the Revolution. Nonetheless, David actively participated in the Revolution and befriended radicals such as Robespierre, Jean-Paul Marat (1743-1793), and Georges Danton (1759-1794), chronicling their achievements with the brush.

In the 1792 Paris Salon, David exhibited *The Tennis Court Oath*, a monumental painting that would be rivaled by no other until the execution of Napoleon's coronation portrait in

²¹ Dowd, 27

1806.²² For the *Tennis Court Oath*, “David set out, like [Benjamin] West in the *Death of Wolfe* (fig. 12), to transform the contemporary happening into a major historical picture free from the trappings - if not the allusions-of allegory and classicism.”²³ The resulting success of the work hurled David into the Convention, where in September of 1792 David was elected a deputy, entering the government in time to vote for the execution of King Louis XVI in January of 1793.²⁴ Delegated to the post of Director of Festivals and Minister of Propaganda, “David emerged as the “official” painter of the Revolution, committed both politically and visually to its most radical manifestation.”²⁵ David full embraced his new position in the hierarchy of the Convention; his public rhetoric proves, this, for before the Convention in 1793, David proclaimed to all present:

The arts...ought to help to expand the progress of the human spirit, to propagate and to transmit to posterity the striking examples of the efforts of an immense people, [who], guided by reason and philosophy, are bringing forth on earth the reign of liberty, equality, and law. The arts then ought to contribute powerfully to public instruction. [They] are the imitation of nature in its most beautiful and its most perfect aspects; a sentiment natural to man attracts him toward the same object. It is not only by charming the eyes that the monuments of art have fulfilled this end; it is by penetrating the soul, it is by making on the mind a profound impression, similar to reality. It is thus that the traits of heroism, of civic virtues offered to the regard of the people will electrify its soul, and will cause to germinate in it, all the passions of glory, of devotion to the welfare of the fatherland.²⁶

²² de Nanteuil 26-27

²³ Boime, 428

²⁴ de Nanteuil, 28

²⁵ Boime, 391

²⁶ Jacques-Louis David, November 15, 1793; Cited from David Lloyd Dowd, *Pageant Master of the Republic: Jacques-Louis David and the French Revolution* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1948) 79

Between David's election to the Convention in 1792 and the Thermidorian Reaction in July of 1794, David was extremely active in the arts and its related spheres, heading the organization of Revolutionary festivals and ceremonies.²⁷ While David was engaged in the Convention, he completed his next major work in 1793, *The Death of Marat* (fig. 13), which ordained the vocal *l'ami du peuple* as a Christ-like figure.²⁸ David's prominence in the Convention would soon reach its end, however, as Robespierre would spiral out of control, leading to his death and the demise of the Jacobins.

In the summer of 1794, the National Convention had finally grown weary of Robespierre, who, on the 8th of Thermidor, proclaimed to the Convention that he held a list of traitors, but refused to release the list. The next day, the 9th of Thermidor, Robespierre and several members of the Jacobins were captured and promptly guillotined.²⁹ Shortly after Robespierre's execution, David was arrested by order of the Convention and prosecuted for his close ties to Robespierre; only a few days before the Thermidorian Reaction, David proclaimed to the entire Convention, "If you [Robespierre] drink hemlock, I will drink it with you."³⁰ David was jailed for some time in the Luxembourg Palace, where he completed his only known landscape, *View From the Luxembourg* (fig. 14).³¹ As *Luxembourg* reveals, "David's prison opus makes his attempt not only to prove himself as an artist but also to recast his artistic identity. From

²⁷ de Nanteuil, 28

²⁸ Mark Ledbury ed., *David after David: Essays on the Later Work* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007) 198

²⁹ Jeremy Popkin, *A Short History of the French Revolution* (Upper Saddle River: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2006) 97-101

³⁰ *Moniteur universel* 21, no. 315, pg. 366-367ff.; Cited from Ewa Lajer-Burchard, *Necklines: The Art of Jacques-Louis David after the Terror* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999) 10

³¹ de Nanteuil, 118

the start he seems to have understood that the only way to save his life was to remind the authorities...that whatever else he might have been, he was first and foremost a renowned artist.”³² Furthermore, *Luxembourg* might also be considered a return to David’s curiosity of landscapes, as he expressed a genuine interest in nature, evidenced from his sketchbooks.³³

After multiple pleas from David’s students to the Convention, he was released in December of 1794, and was reinstated to the Convention as a deputy. In October of 1795, David was granted a full pardon for all past actions, and in December of that year, became a faculty member of the newly created *Institut National des Sciences et des Arts*. David, being able to paint freely once again, completed *Sabines* (fig. 15), which he finished in 1799, his last major work before his career under Napoleon.³⁴

David first encountered Napoleon in 1797, and both were immediately captivated with the other; Napoleon had long desired to employ David’s artistic talents, and David viewed Napoleon as the progression of the Revolution.³⁵ The relationship grew quickly, and in February of 1800, David was declared the official painter of the Napoleonic government.³⁶ However, it is difficult to determine David’s true intentions for Napoleon as with the Revolution, but it seems clear that the painter viewed something in

³² Ewa Lajer-Burcharth, *Necklines: The Art of Jacques-Louis David after the Terror* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999) 15

³³ Dowd, 10

³⁴ de Nanteuil, 33-35

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 35

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 36

Napoleon, whether it be the ideals of the Revolution or the potential for greater artistic glory. However, it remains clear that the fates of both were codependent and intertwined, and it is difficult for the modern scholar to discuss one without the other. Napoleon, despite his lack of artistic ability, clearly understood the importance of art, as Dorothy Johnson notes, “Perhaps to an even greater extent than his predecessors among European monarchs, Napoleon blatantly viewed art as a tool to manipulate public opinion and thought of his painters and sculptors as a small, selective private army who, through their weapons of representation, helped to determine and shape public response to the new leader.”³⁷ However, David was equally aware of the effect art could harness for the Napoleonic image, as well as the success that working for a man as powerful as Napoleon would bring:

I will be punctual in fulfilling the commitments I have made to his Majesty. I understand only too well the importance of such works. What painter, what poet could ever be in a better position than I: I will glide into posterity in the shadow of my hero.³⁸

It is evident that both men understood their roles in the relationship between art and the state; David was to execute the images that Napoleon would use for the propagandistic formation of his public image. While their professional relationship began on a positive note, David’s attraction for Napoleon would wane throughout the years, as the emperor would place more restrictions and demands upon David with the progression of each

³⁷ Dorothy Johnson, *Jacques-Louis David: Art in Metamorphosis* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993) 175

³⁸ Reprinted in *Archives de l’Art français* (Paris, 1855-56), 33-39; Cited from Dorothy Johnson, *Jacques-Louis David: Art in Metamorphosis* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993) 176

commission. Regardless of David's attitudes towards Napoleon, the paintings discussed in the succeeding chapters would come to define an iconic image of the emperor.

CHAPTER II

FROM THE CONSULATE TO THE EMPIRE OVER EUROPE, 1793 TO 1804

Depictions of military heroism

At the time of commissioning of *Napoleon Crossing St. Bernard* (fig. 16), Napoleon had already risen through the military ranks become First Consul of France after the *coup d'état* on November 9, 1799. One of his first victories in the field is arguably one of the most important for Revolutionary France: the recapturing of Toulon; in August 1793, British naval forces seized this strategic location which traditionally posited the French navy in an area to dominate control of the Mediterranean.³⁹ Napoleon, in command of the artillery, was able to enact his strategy, after the commanders had exhausted all other resources.⁴⁰ Using his incredible knowledge of artillery and the terrain, Napoleon began a bombardment of the British fleet; after seven days, the British abandoned Toulon. Napoleon's success contributed to his appointment as Senior Gunner to the Army of Italy in 1794.⁴¹

Fate called Napoleon back to Paris, where in September 1795 he learned that the Directory had deleted his name from the list of generals because he declined to serve in

³⁹ Frank McLynn, *Napoleon: A Biography* (New York: Arcade Publishing, 1997) 72

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 74

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 78

the Vendée Campaign.⁴² The Vendée, a region in western France, rose up in protest in 1793 against the Revolutionary government for its actions against the Church and monarchy, most notably the execution of King Louis XVI and the Civil Constitution of the Clergy, which stripped the Catholic Church in France of any real power. Civil war raged from 1793 until 1796 when those in rebellion were finally silenced from the brutal tactics of the French government. Numbers estimate that 220,000 to 250,000 of those who lived in the Vendée were killed, consisting over a quarter of its population.⁴³ The French military employed extremely merciless tactics against the Vendée insurgents, who often times reverted to guerilla warfare against the French Regulars. Not wanting to be associated with a government sponsored campaign that exterminated its own peoples, Napoleon willfully chose to not participate. Therefore, his future uncertain, in October Napoleon was asked "...to support the constitution..." against a large gathering of citizens protesting in opposition to the Directory.⁴⁴ Napoleon, employing the use of artillery, successfully subdued the mob after personally taking command and ordering his soldiers to fire into the crowd. Napoleon had prevented the overthrow of the Directory, and was now in the favor of the government.

In 1796 Napoleon was given command of the Army of Italy, a position he had sought after for years, for he understood the potential glory involved in capturing Apennine

⁴² Ibid., 93

⁴³ David Bell, *The First Total War: Napoleon's Europe and the Birth of Warfare as We Know It* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2007) 156

⁴⁴ Robert Harvey, *The War of Wars: The Great European Conflict 1793-1815* (New York: Carroll and Graf Publishers, 2006) 129

Peninsula.⁴⁵ Napoleon, able to fully exercise his skill as a tactician and commander, was outside the gates of Milan shortly after the start of his campaign.⁴⁶ Napoleon, who was ordered by the Directory to give up his command, refused, and convinced the government back in Paris to allow him to continue further into Italy.⁴⁷ Austrian forces produced a counteroffensive that sent Napoleon scrambling back into northern Italy, but after a series of stunning victories, the French general placed himself seventy-five miles outside Vienna. Austria sued for peace on April 23, 1796.⁴⁸ The Treaty of Campo Formio on October 17, 1797 formally recognized the peace between Austria and France in Italy.⁴⁹ Under the conditions of the treaty, Austria was to recognize the Cisalpine Republic, established by France, as well as surrender the Austrian Netherlands to France. Furthermore, Austria was to officially recognize French rule on the left side of the Rhine River. To ease Austria's losses, Napoleon awarded Venice to his defeated opponent.⁵⁰

France now targeted Egypt as an attempt to reestablish its overseas empire at the expense of England. France had long sought after this British territory as early as 1769, when its capture was first proposed by Louis XV's foreign minister, the duc de Choiseul.⁵¹ Napoleon, once again seeking glory, submitted his proposal of operations to seize Egypt and Malta and in May 1798 was sailing with a French fleet towards Africa.⁵²

⁴⁵ Ibid., 133

⁴⁶ Ibid., 138

⁴⁷ Ibid., 139

⁴⁸ Brian Taylor, *The Empire of the French: A Chronology of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars 1792-1815* (Stonehouse, Gloucestershire: Oaklands Book Services, 2006) 80

⁴⁹ J. Christopher Herold, *The Age of Napoleon* (New York: American Heritage Inc., 1991) 59

⁵⁰ Taylor, 99

⁵¹ Herold, 69

⁵² Ibid., 61

On June 12, Malta surrendered to France, and on the first of July the first French troops began landing at Alexandria.⁵³ Napoleon, reaching Egypt, planned to use the conquered territory as a starting point to destroy the British stranglehold on India.⁵⁴ On July 22, after handing his Mameluke opponents a humiliating defeat at the Battle of the Pyramids, Napoleon occupied Cairo, Egypt.⁵⁵ The importance of such a victory was understood by Napoleon, who remarked to his *Armée l'Orient* days before the battle:

Soldiers! You are about to undertake a conquest whose effects on the world's civilization and trade are incalculable. You will inflict upon England a blow which is certain to wound her in her most sensitive spot, while waiting for the day when you can deal her the death blow. We shall make some wearisome marches; we shall fight a few battles; we shall succeed in all our enterprises; destiny is for us. The Mameluke beys, who exclusively favor English trade...will cease to exist a few days after our landing.⁵⁶

Napoleon's victories in Egypt were short lived: the English launched a counteroffensive, and Bonaparte, after suffering a series of losses, notably, the humiliating defeat at the Battle of the Nile at the hands of Admiral Horatio Nelson (1758-1805), had learned of a series of political setbacks, as well as French losses to the Austrians and Russians in Italy. Under the pretense of *la patrie en danger*, Napoleon left his subordinate to command the army in Egypt and sailed back to France, and by the early days of October 1799 had reached the port of St. Raphael.⁵⁷

⁵³ Ibid., 63

⁵⁴ General Sir James Marshall-Cornwall, *Napoleon as Military Commander* (London, England: Penguin Books, 1967) 81

⁵⁵ Harvey, 240

⁵⁶ Ibid., 233

⁵⁷ Marshall-Cornwall, 92

Now capable of personally taking charge of the political situation in Paris, Napoleon, with the assistance of Emmanuel-Joseph Sieyès (1748-1836), Charles Maurice de Talleyrand-Périgold (1754-1838), and Joseph Fouché (1759-1820), plotted a coup against the Directory.⁵⁸ On November 9, 1799, after an alleged plot against the Directory, the legislative body was moved to St. Cloud, where soldiers, loyal to Napoleon, were placed to 'protect' them.⁵⁹ At one point during the Council's deliberations, Napoleon entered the chamber, and denounced the legislature to the point where the Speaker of the House, Lucien Bonaparte (Napoleon's brother) ordered the soldiers into the chamber to protect Napoleon from possible assassination attempts. Those legislators that remained after several were taken away by the soldiers, voted to create a triumvirate, at which point Napoleon, Sieyès, and Roger Ducos (1747-1816) were appointed temporary consuls.⁶⁰ Napoleon, now in command, proclaimed to the soldiers present:

Soldiers, the extraordinary decree of the Upper Chamber...has placed me in command of the city and army. The Republic has been badly governed for two years...Liberty, victory, and peace will regain for the French Republic...Vive la République!⁶¹

In December 1799, the Constitution of Year VIII named Napoleon First Consul of France. Immediately turning to military affairs, Napoleon sought to recover lost territory, particularly in Italy, where the Austrians began seizing land once more. In May

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 94

⁶⁰ Ibid., 95

⁶¹ Napoleon Bonaparte. *Correspondance de Napoléon I* (New York: AMS Press, 1974) 2

1800, Napoleon launched his campaign against the Austrians by passing over the Alps through his famed maneuver *sur les derrières*.⁶² On June 14, 1800, Napoleon was forced to defend himself when the Austrians launched a surprise offensive outside the village of Marengo. After a series of setbacks for the French, Napoleon was, through a series of fortunate events, able to secure a victory, albeit barely.⁶³ The Austrian high command negotiated for peace the next day, and the outcome of the Convention of Alessandria was “...all Austrian armies were withdrawn east of the Ticino river and all strongholds were given up west of Milan.”⁶⁴ Seeing the opportunity to wrest control of more territory from his enemies, Napoleon sent one of his subordinates, Joachim Murat (1767-1815), to occupy the Papal States, while another contingent was ordered to seize Tuscany.⁶⁵ It is the backdrop of the future campaign into Italy and the victory at Marengo that David uses as his source of inspiration for *Napoleon Crossing the St. Bernard*.

Commissioned in 1800 by King Charles IV of Spain, the painting was intended to be part of a series of ‘diplomatic initiatives’ between Spain and France; the cost of the painting was to be 24,000 livres.⁶⁶ As for Napoleon’s input, “...his main concern was that the presence of genius be apparent.”⁶⁷ However, as Napoleon was keen to realize that the purpose of history paintings are to instruct, i.e. it is the lesson that is the most important aspect of this work, not necessarily the physical resemblance. “The historical

⁶² Harvey, 293

⁶³ Ibid., 295

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Philip Bordes, *Jacques-Louis David: Empire to Exile* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005) 85

⁶⁷ Luc de Nanteuil, *Jacques-Louis David* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Incorporated, 1985) 134

painter's purpose was exhortation, elevation of the soul..."⁶⁸ Thus, David's ultimate intention was "to render only the superior beauty (*le beau ideal*) of the figure..."⁶⁹ This was defended by Napoleon himself, who believed that verisimilitude was unimportant, because history judges a person's actions, and not necessarily his or her appearance.⁷⁰ Napoleon found the issue of 'likeness' in history painting almost degrading, as evidenced when David asked Napoleon to pose for the portrait, with Napoleon refusing on the grounds that "the most important feature of a portrait was character not likeness..."⁷¹ Furthermore, Napoleon protested the original design of the painting, in which David intended to show Bonaparte in the action of sword fighting, and favored what is now the present work.⁷² Napoleon, although not a painter himself, had a respectable knowledge of art and was clearly aware of the potential of such a work as *St. Bernard*.

David's version of the events is much more highly idealized than are other interpretations of the event; however, as it has been noted, the purpose of the work was not to portray an accurate depiction of the event, but instead it was for the promotion of Napoleon as a strong, assertive hero of an equally strong nation. The work received harsh criticisms; the Spanish were intensely critical of the painting at the outset, especially the Spanish ambassador José Nicolás de Azara, who disagreed with the

⁶⁸ Beth S. Wright, *Painting and History During the French Restoration: Abandoned by the Past* (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 1997) 15

⁶⁹ Bordes, 85

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Lee, 231

⁷² Ibid., 233

work's lack of physical similarities.⁷³ When first exhibited at the Salon, the picture was heavily criticized for the manner in which the First Consul of France was portrayed. However, the message is clear, because *St. Bernard* conveyed not just to France's Spanish neighbors, but to everyone who gazed upon it, that France was now under the assertive control of a man who was realizing his destiny. Finally, the impact of the work in the effort of legitimization is effective because it not only conveys the idea that Napoleon is equal to the likes of Charlemagne and Hannibal, but that he is their heir in the western world, and he will soon surpass them, as evidenced by the positioning of the horse, which will soon carry him beyond the stones and into glory.

The soldiers, who struggle to make their way up through the pass and into Italy, are led by their confident and determined leader. The point is clearly made, and David was successful in portraying the “genius” of Bonaparte. The deep contrast between the horse and its rider is the greatest source of this genius David portrays. The horse, frightened, looks almost as if the mountains have caught its eye and now it wants to back away from the conquest; it is unwilling to proceed forward; it begs the rider to turn around and return to the safety of French soil. The rider, however, remains calm and stone-faced in the presence of such fears, seeing the potential glory beyond the treacherous pass. It is in the same manner that Napoleon conquers the fears of the horse he intends to conquer the fields of Italy. The theory of physiognomics applies to not just Napoleon, but the horse as well. It was common practice in the 18th through 19th centuries to reflect the emotions

⁷³ Bordes, 85

of humanity into animals; this is largely due to the publication of Charles Le Brun's (1619-1690) *Conférence sur l'expression générale et particulière*, which stressed the application of human emotions into the expressions of animals. Le Brun's example of terror (fig. 17) is best represented in the eyes of the horse, which begs its rider to turn around.⁷⁴ Napoleon's pose of nearly standing in the saddle suggests that, at any moment, he is willing to jump off of his horse and join his men in the assault. With one hand he controls the horse, and with the other, David presents Napoleon in a highly Romanized fashion, the right hand in the *ad locutio* pose, in a reference the emperors of Rome, specifically Marcus Aurelius's *Equestrian Statute* (fig. 18), where the Roman emperor decisively leads his country in the same pose. It is "...the hero confronting his destiny."⁷⁵ Underneath Bonaparte, etched in stone, are the names of Charlemagne and Hannibal, and his own, as he now joins this elite pair.

The members of the infantry are almost entirely concealed from the portrait; they play a role of little importance in the overall aesthetic of the work. The main focus is Bonaparte, the man who gallantly commands those soldiers up the terrain and on to victory, all in the name of France. In this militaristic painting, it is the soldiers who would be nothing without the skilled military mind of Napoleon. Common in military portraiture, the ranks of the army are often present, but the officers and those of higher ranking are given much more prominence. David continues this tradition, and at the

⁷⁴ Jennifer Montagu, *The Expression of the Passions: The Origins and Influence of Charles Le Brun's Conférence sur l'expression générale et particulière* (New Haven : Yale University Press, 1994) 21

⁷⁵ Bordes, 26

same time greatly exaggerates it, managing to paint Napoleon from such a perspective that he appears monumentally larger than everything else in the work.

The reference to Charlemagne and Hannibal represents a critical aspect of Napoleonic Art under David: the idea of legitimization through the connection to great leaders of the past. “One manifestation of this was a curious history of relics...which was integral to the promotion of the legitimacy of Napoleon’s rule....the architects of Napoleon’s empire also dug deeper into the past and promoted parallels with the Roman Empire, predictably, and with the first and second dynasties of French kings, the Merovingian and the Carolingian....Charlemagne functioned on several levels.”⁷⁶ The result of this frantic search for relics of former rulers was the incorporation of such objects into the iconography of the Napoleonic Empire in an attempt to establish itself as part of a long line of descendents, particularly Charlemagne. The association with Charlemagne was paramount for Napoleon, as not only had Charlemagne established the first French Empire, but he had done so under the same techniques that Napoleon was employing. Charlemagne borrowed constantly from the Romans, especially in architecture, in a carefully orchestrated effort to show his peoples, and the rest of Europe, that that the empire he had established was legitimate. “The first initiations of Napoleon’s move toward empire that were made public took the form of reinventing relics-that is, of investing historical artifacts with a particular political significance and the symbolic

⁷⁶ Todd Porterfield and Susan L. Siegfried, *Staging Empire: Napoleon, Ingres, and David* (University Park, Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006) 26

power to legitimate the new ruler.”⁷⁷ It was essentially a way for Charlemagne, and later Napoleon, to publically respond to and counter the criticisms that neither of these men qualified as a legitimate ruler because of the methods through which each established reign. Napoleon positioned himself politically and martially descended from Charlemagne is further noticeable by comparing himself – explicitly and implicitly – to “... [Charlemagne, who] was a military leader of unprecedented accomplishment; given his stature as the greatest of French kings...”⁷⁸ Napoleon not only played the similarities to his advantage, but he seemed to truly believe that he was the successor to Charlemagne.

Napoleon further perpetrated this campaign of legitimization through the visual reference to Hannibal. Hannibal was a Carthaginian general most noted for his exploits in the Second Punic Wars between Carthage and Rome (218-201 B.C.). In the years following the First Punic War (264-241 B.C.) in which Rome established themselves as a great naval power, Carthage began expansion into modern day Spain.⁷⁹ Rome began to respond when news reached the capital that Carthaginian expansion had reached as far as the Ebro River.⁸⁰ Such expansion was followed up by an incursion into Italy under the direct command of Hannibal.⁸¹ Under this general’s bold and innovative leadership, the Carthaginian army crossed over the Alps, complete with a unit of armed elephants, an unprecedented tactical maneuver. Hannibal, “...having annihilated a number of Roman

⁷⁷ Ibid., 27

⁷⁸ Ibid., 26

⁷⁹ J.M. Roberts, *The Penguin History of Europe* (London: Penguin Books, 1997) 54

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid.

armies sent to halt him, had marched the length of Italy and was campaigning strongly in the South.⁸² Additionally, besides being unable to subdue Hannibal, Rome was having difficulties with Carthage's allies, most notably the Celts in the north and the Macedonians further east.⁸³ After bringing the war [literally] to the gates of the city of Rome, Hannibal was eventually defeated by the Roman general Scipio Africanus at the Battle of Zama (202 B.C.).⁸⁴ It should be noted, that it required Scipio to sail to Africa (the location of Carthage), forcing Hannibal to retreat from Italy to defend his capital.⁸⁵ However, on Italian soil, the Romans were incapable of defeating their Carthaginian opponent.

Hannibal revolutionized warfare not just through the incorporation of unique armed units, such as armored elephants, but that he employed enormously successful tactics that enabled him to invade Italy and crush his Roman rivals for several years. More specifically, the strategy of crossing through the Alps prevented the Romans from incorporating a superior navy into their strategy, and thus Hannibal forced them to fight land battles, from which he had the upper hand. Thus, Hannibal was a critical figure for Napoleon to associate himself with. It would be fitting for David to promote the commonality between Napoleon to Hannibal, as both men were conquerors of the Alps and Rome (although Hannibal's was merely temporary). Furthermore, the fact that Napoleon conquered Italy (on two occasions) provides an deeper meaning as to the

⁸² Norman Davies, *Europe: A History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996) 139

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Roberts, 54

⁸⁵ Ibid.

‘strategic’ placement of the stones underneath Napoleon, suggesting the French general will ride over the Alps and into Italy, where he will become a greater success than his Carthaginian ancestor was.

The reference to the Rome is reinforced through the gesture of Napoleon’s pointing arm, the *ad locutio* pose. At first glance, such action evokes the image of the Equestrian Statue of Marcus Aurelius (163-173 C.E.). David frequently incorporated Roman gestures into his works, especially during the Revolutionary period. One of the most prominent the paintings he produced during the Revolution, *The Tennis Court Oath*, depicted the oath taken by the new National Assembly (created on June 17, 1789) where its members “...swore to remain in session as long as necessary to give France a constitution...”⁸⁶ As David chronicled the event, the administrator of the oath, Bailley, leads the assembly while holding his right arm in a classic Roman salute.⁸⁷ Several other figures take part in this gesture, while others embrace one another in a Roman handshake, and a select few are simply too overcome with the glory of the event to do anything. David’s own belief about the importance of this work was that it would be “...a modern and greatly expanded version of the *Horatii* and the deputies became the equivalents of the heroes of antiquity.”⁸⁸ The composition was supported by the Assembly themselves, especially the Jacobins, to such an extent that some believe this

⁸⁶ Philip Bordes, “Jaques-Louis David’s ‘Serment du Jeu de Paume’: Propaganda Without a Cause?” *Oxford Art Journal* 3 (2) (1980) 19

⁸⁷ Lee, 136-7

⁸⁸ Ibid., 139

work to be a form of propaganda for the Jacobins.⁸⁹ Nonetheless, the work sparked revolutionary fervor when it was publically exhibited in September 1791, purposefully placed next to David's own *Brutus* and *Horatii*, the effect was awe-inspiring.⁹⁰ The effect of the painting prompted one critic to proclaim:

Frenchman, run fly, leave everything, hurry to be a witness to the oath of the Tennis Court, and if you are not set on fire and consumed by patriotic flames...you are not worthy of liberty.⁹¹

The idea of France as the new Rome, destined to free its people from the absolutist chains of monarchial rule, is clearly stated in *Tennis Court* and reiterated in *St. Bernard*.

The effort of legitimization through the use of Roman gestures is, therefore, nothing new for David. Much like how his *Tennis Court* is an attempt to 'Romanize' the new National Assembly, Napoleon's gesture in *St. Bernard* is another attempt to factor in the Roman reference. His gesture is both a military and political one: much like Marcus Aurelius, Napoleon is the leader of both the French people and their armies. Even the pretext for the painting-the invasion into Italy-suggests France's positioning as the heirs to Rome.

⁸⁹ Bordes, 19

⁹⁰ Elizabeth Barkley Wilson, "Jacques-Louis David" *Smithsonian* 29 (5) (1998) 3

⁹¹ Ibid.

The coronation of Napoleon Bonaparte

In November 1800, Napoleon resumed his quest for territorial acquisition throughout all of Europe. The consul had at his disposal four principal armies: seventy thousand in Italy, one hundred thousand positioned on the Danube, a reserve force of fourteen thousand stationed in Switzerland, and a Gallo-Batavian force of fourteen thousand. Napoleon's first movements were against his Austrian opponent, the Archduke John of Austria (Born Johann von Österreich, 1782-1859) in December, where the French force stationed on the Danube under General Jean Victor Marie Moreau (1763-1813) crushed the Archduke's 83,000 men at the Battle of Hohenlinden on December 3. Generals Michel Ney (1769-1815) and Emmanuel de Grouchy (1766-1847) commanded devastating attacks against the Austrian flanks; the battle resulted in 14,000 Austrian casualties against the French 2,300.⁹² From Germany, Napoleon turned to his reserve force in Switzerland, which pushed into the Splügen Pass in midwinter. On February 9, 1801, The Treaty of Lunéville signed between France and Austria required recognition of the French frontiers of the Rhine and Adige Rivers in Italy, as well as Austrian recognition of the Swiss, Dutch, and Italian satellites that France established. As compensation, Napoleon awarded Austria formerly independent territories from among the member states of the Holy Roman Empire. The peace at Lunéville signaled the initial phases that would lead to the destruction of the Holy Roman Empire; part of the provisions was the French reorganization of the empire on behalf of Prussia and other

⁹² Taylor, 131

Anti-Austrian states. The effects of Lunéville permanently displaced Austria from northwest Italy, establishing a French protectorate, as well as ending Austria's military offenses and breaking the Second Coalition against France.⁹³

Napoleon spent much of the years 1800 to 1805 further consolidating his power. Despite his authoritarian title, Napoleon still only loosely held power within the greater French population. One of the first efforts to strengthen his grip were negotiations with the Catholic Church, a method meant to garner support from the conservative arm of France's population. On July 15, 1801, Napoleon signed a concordat with the Church, officially re-establishing Catholicism in France.⁹⁴ For many opponents of the Napoleonic regime, the concordat with the Church was viewed as the final blow to the Revolution, since the Church was "...what had made France unable to throw off the chains of absolutism."⁹⁵ Napoleon's agreement with the Church was strictly for security: he viewed the Church as an authoritative power able to further secure his reign, as well as a preventative measure for any future religious revolts.

Individuals formerly recognized as Royalists were responsible for much of the open hostilities against Napoleon during these years; the most prominent display being an assassination attempt on Christmas Eve, 1800 while Napoleon was traveling to attend the theatre. The attempt on Napoleon's life backfired for the Royalists, as Napoleon used

⁹³ Frederick W. Kagan, *The End of the Old Order: Napoleon and Europe, 1801-1805* (Cambridge: De Capo Press, 2006) 17-8

⁹⁴ Taylor, 136

⁹⁵ McLynn, 249

it as justification to deport several of his toughest critics, particularly the Jacobins, who vehemently opposed his seizure of power. In an attempt to further gain control, Napoleon enacted a series of legislative measures, reforming the administrative systems of the governments. These measures restored stability to the nation's economic and financial systems.⁹⁶

Once more turning to enemies outside of France's borders, on March 27, 1802, France and England signed the Treaty of Amiens, even further securing Napoleon's power. Ending over a decade of conflict on the continent, Amiens stipulated that Great Britain would give up all extra European lands, including Malta and portions of India. England was to restore to France and her Dutch and Spanish allies all conquests made since 1793 with the exception of Trinidad and Ceylon.⁹⁷ England was also to guarantee the integrity of the Ottoman Empire. The major stipulation for France was that it was to evacuate the Papal States and Naples.⁹⁸ For England, the agreements were arguably some of the worst in the history of English diplomatic relations. Lord Addington, the Prime Minister of England, awarded France nearly everything it asked for.⁹⁹

Napoleon, finally achieving total peace throughout Europe, was now able to completely focus on domestic issues throughout his empire. He began with a reorganization of the Germanic and Italian states, but the First Consul's main priorities lay in his armed

⁹⁶ Marshall-Cornwall, 116

⁹⁷ Herold, 143

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Harvey, 317

forces, where he enacted extensive reform of the navy and army to stabilize their position in the aftermath of the Revolutionary Wars.¹⁰⁰ Despite securing peace with all his enemies outside France's borders, Napoleon intended to further strengthen his position in the French government. On August 2, 1802 Napoleon was declared consul for life after a plebiscite voted overwhelmingly in his favor.¹⁰¹

Napoleon's attempts to secure his power reached into the cultural realm as well, as he invented an entirely new social system. At the top echelon was Napoleon's family, the new French royalty. Next in order to Napoleon's immediate family were his ministers Fouché and Talleyrand. Beneath these men was an 'imperial nobility'; these figures were awarded the title of 'Marshal', as well as being issued large incomes. In May of 1804, Napoleon appointed eighteen marshals; these men were, generally speaking, Napoleon's closest allies. Below this level of militaristic aristocracy, Napoleon created a noble class that, by the end of his reign, consisted of twenty three dukes, four hundred fifty counts, fifteen hundred barons, and fifteen hundred knights. Napoleon's hierarchy "...was a colossal system of honors, spoils and patronage designed to ensure loyalty to the upstart Empire."¹⁰² In the eyes of many, "The French Revolution had turned full circle. A man who still professed himself a republican had created an upper class based on cronyism and military power that far surpassed that of Louis XVI."¹⁰³ To add further insult to injury to Napoleon's opponents, Josephine spent money at an unprecedented rate, to

¹⁰⁰ Kagan,

¹⁰¹ Brian Taylor, 137

¹⁰² Kagan, 338

¹⁰³ Ibid., 339

such an extent that Marie- Antoinette seemed parsimonious by comparison. Josephine was recorded to have purchased an average nine hundred dresses a year; Antoinette averaged a paltry one hundred seventy. Josephine also averaged one thousand pairs of gloves a year. A financial investigation of Josephine's expenses revealed her total debt as 1,200,000 francs.¹⁰⁴

Napoleon, now the permanent head of France, began movements to resume territorial conquest. The same day he was declared First Consul for life, Napoleon annexed the island of Elba. On September 11 of 1802, Piedmont was annexed by France. In October, Napoleon annexed Switzerland and established full political control of that nation by January of 1803 through his Act of Mediation. Despite objections from the European powers, "...the reform of the Swiss government imposed by Napoleon's 'Act of Mediation' was so acceptable to the Swiss that it serves as the basis of Swiss government to this day."¹⁰⁵ The British, viewing Napoleon as a threat to their own global empire, declared war on March 16, 1803. This declaration marked the start of constant conflict between the two countries that would not halt until Napoleon's final defeat at Waterloo in June of 1815.

After Britain declared war, Napoleon commenced assembly of an English invasion force in June 1803.¹⁰⁶ Napoleon initially ordered the construction of five hundred twenty landing craft, which would carry hundreds of thousands of men, as well as cannon,

¹⁰⁴ McLynn, 241

¹⁰⁵ Kagan, 39

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 57

supplies, horses, and anything else the army would need. By February 1804, Napoleon was prepared to move across the channel, dictating to his subordinate in Bruges, Marshal Louis-Nicolas d'Avout, (1770-1823), popularly known simply as Davout, "The time approaches when operations will start." However, the invasion was halted, when approximately a week after issuing the statement to Davout, Napoleon learned of a Royalist plot to kidnap him while he was riding to either St. Cloud or his country home at Malmaison. Napoleon, echoing his actions after the events on Christmas Eve, 1800, once again attempted to strengthen his power. On May 18, 1804, in an attempt to establish a hereditary monarchy, Napoleon was declared Napoleon I, Emperor of France. The same year, 1804, Napoleon published his *Code Civil*, which became the basis of French civil law. The Code Civil was a means for Napoleon to further anchor his power, as it heavily favored the French middle class. One of the key elements would be its lack of rights granted to women, who, through their loss of rights, were supposed to return to their maternal duties and raise a household.¹⁰⁷

With each passing day, it appeared to the French high command that an invasion of England was becoming increasingly improbable. Napoleon, bordering on obsession, continued preparations throughout the summer and fall of 1804. On July 26, Napoleon, writing to Marshal Guillaume Marie Anne Brune (1763-1815) in Constantinople, declared "I have with me here nearly 120,000 men and 3,000 landing craft, which only

¹⁰⁷ McLynn, 254-5

await a favorable wind to carry the Imperial Eagle to the Tower of London.”¹⁰⁸ The French were waiting for two events before moving across the channel: favorable weather, and for the British naval units off the coast of Brest, Rochefort, and Toulon, to disperse. The British never budged, and further delays kept the French stationed at port until December 1804, where on the 23rd Napoleon wrote “The season is already well advanced and every hour is irreparable.”¹⁰⁹ The highlight of this campaign would come in March of 1805, when Napoleon’s commander in Toulon, Admiral Pierre-Charles-Jean-Baptiste-Silvestre de Villeneuve (1763-1806), sailed from port and reached Martinique in May, eluding the British under Vice Admiral Horatio Nelson (1758-1805). Delayed by unfortunate weather, Nelson eventually tracked Villeneuve down, where the two engaged in defensive maneuvers across the Atlantic for five months, until a final confrontation took place at the Battle of Trafalgar on October 21, 1805. Trafalgar would completely destroy any further consideration of a French invasion of England.

In lieu of the failed invasion of England, by December 1804 Napoleon had consolidated power within his French empire. A temporary lull in fighting on the continent enabled Napoleon to acquire territory with ease, especially as the Austrians, his most immediate land threat, had been knocked out of the war after Lunéville. Russia was experiencing a shift in power after the assassination of the Czar Paul (born *Pavel Petrovich*, 1754-

¹⁰⁸ Marshall-Cornwall, 121

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 123

1801), and it was not until July of 1805 that Russia became a serious threat once more, after establishing the Third Coalition with Great Britain.¹¹⁰

The coronation, which took place on December 2, 1804, was Napoleon's attempt at "Renewing the tradition established by Charlemagne (742-814), whose moral successor he claimed to be."¹¹¹ Despite his intense desire to imitate the Carolingian emperor, Napoleon broke with traditional coronation procedure, by deciding to crown himself emperor. An account from the *Journal des Débats* on December 5th stated, "When the emperor was at the altar for his crowning, he himself seized the imperial crown and placed it on his head: it was a diadem of oak and laurel leaves made of gold. [His majesty] then took the crown prepared for the empress, and after adorning himself with it for just a moment, he placed it on the head of his august spouse."¹¹² Napoleon, after crowning himself in front of the Church, his family, and the French military elite, crowned his wife, Josephine, empress. Despite Napoleon's 'impromptu' self crowning, this gesture was planned, as were the many other changes made to the formal process of coronation. Napoleon purposefully ensured that the viewing of the religious aspects of the ceremony were restricted to the select few who were present at the front, close to Napoleon; Napoleon wanted "...the priest and such men whose superior intellects have bestowed upon them the faith equal to that of the eight century."¹¹³ In a further disregard

¹¹⁰ Kagan, 141

¹¹¹ de Nanteuil, 138

¹¹² Philip Bordes, *Jacques-Louis David: Empire to Exile* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005) 95

¹¹³ Lee, 243

for religious doctrine, Napoleon refused to take communion. Finally, he refused the traditional oath of kings and instead took the constitutional oath:

I swear to maintain the territory of the Republic in its integrity; to respect and enforce the laws of the Concordat and the freedom of worship; to respect and enforce equality before the law, political and civil liberty and the irreversibility of the sales of national property; to lay on no duty, to impose no tax except according to law; to maintain the institution of the Legion of Honor; and to govern only in accordance with the interests, the happiness and the glory of the French people.¹¹⁴

In his use of the Constitutional Oath, Napoleon ensured that he was not bound by promises made to the Catholic Church. To use the oath of the national government was, for all intents and purposes, to swear an oath to himself, considering that, after taking the oath he was to become *the* state.

Commissioned in 1804, *Le Sacre* (fig. 19) was one of four paintings to be painted by David for Napoleon (*Coronation*, *The Enthronement*, *The Arrival at the Hôtel de Ville*, *Distribution of the Eagle Standards*). The importance of *Le Sacre* was not lost upon David, who stated “The *Coronation* was to be an homage to Napoleon, the self-made man, who had the audacity to crown himself emperor. The court, the pope and his religious retinue, and the spectators from the different orders of society observe this momentous act, which overturns the centuries-old monarchical structure of French society...”¹¹⁵ David himself was more than willing to produce such an important artistic

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Dorothy Johnson, ed. *Jacques-Louis David : New Perspectives* (Newark : University of Delaware Press, 2006) 137

rendering of history. “I admit that I have long been envious of those great painters who preceded me for those occasions which I thought would never come my way. I shall have painted an *emperor* and a *pope*!”¹¹⁶ These words, despite their controversy as to whether or not David actually spoke these words, accurately convey David’s attitudes towards the opportunity to paint such important political figures.

Le Sacre was changed several times throughout the course of its production. Napoleon played a critical role in its final production, suggesting several changes David should make, as well as constantly requesting progress of the work.¹¹⁷ The original sketch of the work portrayed Napoleon crowning himself (fig. 20), while his free hand is shown pressing his sword to his heart, all while the pope watches.¹¹⁸ It is “...a gesture meant to express unequivocally the military rationale of his political power: “he who has been able to conquer [the crown] will be just as able to defend it.””¹¹⁹

Napoleon, the first to view the work, arrived at David’s studio with a procession of individuals accompanying him. Napoleon was rumored to have stayed an hour to view the work, and his initial reaction was very positive: “How it is grand! How all the objects are in relief! That is very beautiful! What truth! This is not a painting; one walks into the picture.”¹²⁰ After his initial praises, Napoleon remarked:

¹¹⁶ Bordes, 36

¹¹⁷ Anita Brookner, *Jacques-Louis David* (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1980) 156

¹¹⁸ Bordes, 93

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 92

¹²⁰ Porterfield, 122

This is not a painting: one can walk around in this picture; life is everywhere...Good, very good, David. You have understood my thoughts, you have made me a French knight. I am grateful to you for recording for posterity the proof of the affection I wished to give to the woman who shares with me the burden of office.¹²¹

David recounts the meeting himself:

The gaze of His Majesty is first fixed on the tribune in the center. The EMPEROR immediately recognized Madame Mère and beside her Madame Soult, Madame de Fontanges, Monsieur de Cossé, Monsieur de Laville, and General Beaumont. 'I perceive further up,' he said, 'the good Monsieur Vien.' 'Yes, Sire,' responded Monsieur David, 'I wanted to render homage to my master by placing him in the picture which, owing to its subject, will be the most important of my works.' This sentiment was approved by His Majesty who appeared to take pleasure by proving to Monsieur David that he recognized all the personages.¹²²

These quotes indicate not just the importance of the painting, but the relationship between David and Napoleon as men who both had a great respect for one another.

The viewpoint is crucial, as it created an sense of accessibility for viewers that allowed people who were not present at the actual ceremony to feel as if they took part in the event. An article in the *Journal Général de France* described the relationship between the work and the viewer by stating "The figures are so perfectly free that one believes them to be in movement." David's positioning of the event in terms of the viewer allows

¹²¹ Lee, 258-9

¹²² *Description du tableau Représentant le Couronnement de Leurs Majestés imperiales et royales, peint par M. David, peintre de Leurs Majestés* (Paris: Aubrey, 1808); Cited from Todd Porterfield and Susan L. Siegfried, *Staging Empire: Napoleon, Ingres, and David* (University Park, Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006) 122

those who come to view the work take part in the ceremony, allowing the viewer to believe that there is a space in the painting specifically for them, essentially where they become a spectator.¹²³ “The spectator can believe, if not actually participate, in the action, in at least seeing a kind of ‘reportage’. The empire has fallen into dust, but the *Couronnement* gives the palpable reality of never ceasing to live before our eyes.”¹²⁴ However, such accessibility was only an illusion for the general public, who were barred from the actual event. Napoleon consciously decided to host the coronation inside Paris’s Cathedral of Notre Dame, rather than upon the traditional Champ de Mars for the following reason:

Times have changed: when people ruled, everything had to be done in their presence; we must take care to let them know that they can no longer expect this kind of treatment. Today the people are represented by legal powers. In any event I cannot accept that the people of Paris, let alone France, should be represented by the twenty or thirty thousand fishwives, or others of their kind, who would invade the Champ de Mars: to me these are simply the ignorable and corrupt populace endemic to a great city.¹²⁵

David thus presents the illusion that the public are able to participate, but at a distance. Much like how Napoleon censored the press from publishing political debate, he prevented the general public from actually participating in public affairs and the government itself. At a Paris Salon in 1808, *Le Sacre* and Gros’s *Battle of Eylau* (fig. 21)

¹²³ Porterfield, 123

¹²⁴ Antoine Schnapper, *David, témoin de son temps*, pg 231; Cited from Todd Porterfield and Susan L. Siegfried, *Staging Empire: Napoleon, Ingres, and David* (University Park, Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006) 124

¹²⁵ Napoléon, *Ses opinions et jugements, sur les homes et sur les choses. Recueillis par ordre alphabétique, avec une introduction et des notes, par M. Damas Hinard* (Paris: Dufey, 1838); Cited from Anita Brookner, *Jacques-Louis David* (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1980) 150

were placed next to one another. During one viewing, an Italian dignitary remarked “*Sacre and massacre*-well, it’s all there in two volumes!”¹²⁶ Such commentary reflects upon the actual relationship between the people and government under the Napoleonic regime, despite David’s attempts to “incorporate” the spectator into an event as important as the coronation.

For the coronation, Notre Dame was completely transformed, incorporating elements such as Roman architecture and statues of Charlemagne, that reflected Napoleon’s desire to connect to past empires; Napoleon brought in several renowned painters and architects to construct a visual aesthetic proper to the historical context for the event. The aesthetic aspects of the coronation were attempts to legitimize Napoleon’s empire. Several of the columns were reconstructed to contain statues of Charlemagne in his own coronation outfit.¹²⁷ However, the most important of these Carolingian imitations would be the crown that Napoleon used in his coronation, which, under the supervision of Dominique-Vivant Denon (1747-1825), was meticulously reconstructed to resemble Charlemagne’s coronation crown (fig. 22).¹²⁸ To add authenticity to the crown, Napoleon had a ‘study’ conducted to affirm its authenticity, and claimed that the study was produced during the French Revolution, asserting that the crown was able to escape the terrors of the Revolution unscathed.¹²⁹ For the coronation itself, Napoleon tried to

¹²⁶ Paul, vicomte de Barras, *Mémoires de Barras, Membre du Directoire*, ed. Georges Duruy (Paris: Hachette, 1895) I:58; Cited from Todd Porterfield and Susan L. Siegfried, *Staging Empire: Napoleon, Ingres, and David* (University Park, Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006) 126

¹²⁷ Porterfield, 45

¹²⁸ Ibid., 139

¹²⁹ Ibid.

negotiate the use of Charlemagne's coronation regalia for his very own.¹³⁰ Napoleon would have found it appropriate to obtain such an important costume, considering he "...saw himself as the modern equivalent of the Frankish Emperor..."¹³¹ The coronation scepter, crowned with the eagle and the hand of justice, as well as the imperial orb, were also some of the objects Napoleon 'reinvented' to link himself to Charlemagne. In a further attempt to establish a connection to Rome and Charlemagne, the entrance to Notre Dame was adorned with a triumphal arch that had colossal statues of Clovis [identify] and Charlemagne.¹³²

Despite Napoleon's claim to be the political descendent of Charlemagne, the comparison to the Frankish king was actually severely suppressed beginning in 1806. The reasoning behind this was the public began to criticize the territorial conquests of Napoleon, which were strikingly similar to those undertaken by Charlemagne. Because of this, Napoleon began to publicly promote a comparison between France and Republican Rome, as this allowed for a continued link to the Revolution years earlier.¹³³ Revolutionary France had viewed itself as the successor to the Roman Republic, as Rome was the innovator of a democratically controlled centralized state. The French revolutionaries viewed themselves as the 18th century version of Republican Rome. One of the major reasons for the success of David's *Le Sacre*, as compared to other artists' interpretations, was the fact that David's picture minimizes the Carolingian references.

¹³⁰ Ibid., 28

¹³¹ Lee, 240

¹³² Ibid., 240

¹³³ Lee, 255

David had originally painted Pope Pius VII as having his hands on his knees, but at the request of Napoleon, David shifted Pius's physical expression so that he is shown blessing the coronation. "...the pope assumes the role of the absorbed sage, the seated philosopher who more profoundly than all present understands the portent of the historical event..."¹³⁴ The pope originally had no intention of coming to Paris, but Napoleon required him to take part in the coronation ceremony. Napoleon's mandate to have the pope in attendance revealed Napoleon's obsessive attempt to emulate Charlemagne's 9th century Frankish empire. However, the invitation to the pope to partake in their ceremonies is the only similarity between Napoleon and Charlemagne. Napoleon, welcomed the Church as a purely conciliatory gesture, as opposed to Charlemagne, who was crowned by the pope at a Christmas Day ceremony in the year 800. Charlemagne, furthermore, was much more religious than Napoleon, who is often considered by modern scholars to have been, at best, agnostic. Charlemagne instrumental in spreading Christian doctrine throughout his empire and felt it was his responsibility to defend the Church. Correspondence between Charlemagne and Popes Stephen II and Hadrian I clarify and codify the Church's dictate that Charlemagne was to protect St. Peter and the Church, and to obey the pope.¹³⁵ Napoleon, while he did spread doctrine throughout his empire, his doctrine had no religious connotations, but rather a civil doctrine of the Revolution. Both Napoleon and Charlemagne viewed themselves as heirs to the Roman Empire; Charlemagne officially established such a link, by (with the blessing of the pope) creating the Holy Roman Empire. Napoleon

¹³⁴ Bordes, 92

¹³⁵ Rosamond McKitterick, *Charlemagne: The Formation of a European Identity* (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2008) 295

simply used Rome as a source for aesthetic and ceremonial iconography. Napoleon had no intention of subordinating himself to Pius VII, and that position is effectively depicted in David's *Le Sacre*: "...all viewers-with the exception of Napoleon-are positioned as subjects and antiquarians."¹³⁶ Napoleon takes the role of the dominant figure in the scene, retaining complete power over France: the military, the government, and the church.

Despite the fact that the focus of the coronation was placed on Napoleon, David chooses to display Josephine as the image's protagonist. One account of the coronation stated "...tears rained on to her joined hands. With infinite care Napoleon fitted her small crown into place behind the diamond diadem and patted it until it was safely anchored."¹³⁷ The shift from portraying Napoleon's self coronation to the crowning of Josephine was a conscious effort on David's part. It was suggested by one of David's protégés, François Gérard (1770-1837), that David remove the moment of Napoleon's self coronation, and instead "...record for posterity the moment when most hearts appear to have melted, the moment of Napoleon's coronation of Josephine."¹³⁸ This shift, however successful it was in dampening debate, seemed to detract from the coronation its real focus (Napoleon), and instead placed all the attention on Josephine. This moment belongs not to Napoleon, but to his wife, who is the central focus of the image. Such importance reveals Josephine's incredible power she held in her relationship with Napoleon.

¹³⁶ Porterfield, 14

¹³⁷ Brookner, 153

¹³⁸ Ibid.

The shift from Napoleon to his wife has led some scholars to theorize that the image “...doubled the complacency solicited in his viewers and rendered less apprehensible the brazen act of self coronation.”¹³⁹ This corresponds to Napoleon’s desire to ensure there was no political conflict involved in the work; showing Josephine at her moment of coronation greatly decreased the potential for political debate. Boutard once wrote “...the more I examine the Picture of the Sacre, the less I feel disposed to make a critique of it; I am even tempted to renounce it.”¹⁴⁰ The image, according to Boutard, lacks any deep meaning, because anything that could lead to debate was removed from the image; the entire controversy of the coronation and the fact that Napoleon crowned himself is downplayed due to David’s choice of subject. As Todd Porterfield writes, the painting has a “...slightly numbing strategy of boredom.” David was highly successful in creating a work that presents the events of the coronation, while removing any trace of potential dissonance.

Prior to Josephine’s coronation, Napoleon had crowned himself, but such an action was highly controversial; it called into question the relationship between church and state, as well as casting shadows on Napoleon’s own view of himself. However, the portrayal of that particular moment in the coronation ceremony fulfills its objectives, because it shows Napoleon as the emperor, but without provoking political outrage. Furthermore,

¹³⁹ Porterfield, 129

¹⁴⁰ “Arlequin au musée” *Journal des Dames et des Modes* 68 (1808) 3; Cited from Todd Porterfield and Susan L. Siegfried, *Staging Empire: Napoleon, Ingres, and David* (University Park, Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006) 135

the particular moment David chooses to paint, Josephine's coronation, depicts her subordination and proposes the notion that "...[the painting] is to render the spectator all the more emotional and compliant and to gender him all the more feminine and passive."¹⁴¹ Essentially, Josephine, at this particular moment in time, helps to reinforce the "reinstatement" of a father figure at the helm of government.¹⁴² Therefore, Josephine, by playing the role of the supportive yet subordinate figure, symbolizes the attitude in which the rest of France should engage.

This idea of Josephine as subordinate, though, should be considered in the relative light of her coeval marital relationship with Napoleon. Her coronation, and the fact that it was conducted at the same time as her husband, was unprecedented. Her predecessors were never crowned at the same time as their husbands, or even in the same location. Furthermore, the Constitution of Year XII had reinstated Salic Law, which, among its many conditions, prevented females from inheriting titles. One expects that the focal point of the image should be Napoleon; the protagonist is instead Josephine. "The feminine gendering of the *Sacre* was no accident, it was instead essential to the painting's mission..."¹⁴³ David purposefully chose to render this moment in the coronation ceremony in order to reveal Napoleon's desire to emphasize his emotional attachment towards Josephine. As stated previously, Napoleon's initial reaction to the work was positive; it permanently displays his wife as someone "...who shares with me

¹⁴¹ Porterfield, 130

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ Ibid., 162-163

the burden of office.”¹⁴⁴ Josephine, therefore, is not a subordinate, she is an equal, the proof of which is seen in the image itself.

Josephine is portrayed as a woman of immense power through her ceremonial gown, which was partially derived from Marie de Medici’s dress from Peter Paul Ruben’s *The Coronation of Marie de Medici* (fig. 23). This reference connects to both the history of France and to the history of European painting. Such a connection through art history is telling, since “Before the Napoleonic Empire, the French tradition of grand-scale scenes of coronation ceremonies was meager; the man precedent was a scene from Peter Paul Rubens’ *Marie de Medici*.”¹⁴⁵ The comparison of Josephine with Marie de Medici presents a strong statement of female power and status, as Marie de Medici was a woman of immense wealth and prestige, who descended from a prominent Italian Renaissance family. The connection is significant for French painting, because it connects David to a line of renowned predecessors before him (such as Rubens), and places him at the forefront for French history painting.

The role of the feminine ideal is also underscored in *Le Sacre*. The image is peppered with allegories pertaining to the female’s role child bearer and mother. During the Ancien Régime (as in other European monarchies) the major task of the queen was to provide an heir to her kingdom. The last queen of France, Marie-Antoinette, was constantly ridiculed in the early years of her reign for an inability to produce an heir (as

¹⁴⁴ Lee, 258-9

¹⁴⁵ Porterfield, 5

is well documented, it was Louis who was the problem, not his wife). The role of Josephine in the coronation can be argued as a pictorial documentation of her accepting this momentous task of producing an heir to Napoleon's kingdom.¹⁴⁶ "With the *Sacre*, David has constructed a painting that means to attest to and guarantee not only femininity but maternity as well, not so much as to say 'It's a girl' but to say 'It's a mother!' ...[the image has] dynastic, personal, and historical examples of maternity."¹⁴⁷ In the effort to promote Josephine's role as mother of her own children and the French populace, David includes several references linking her to maternal allegories. Josephine's own children from her first marriage, Hortense and Eugène de Beauharnais, are painted in the image. To add further emphasis, Napoleon's own mother, Letizia Bonaparte, who bore eight children, oversees the coronation of Josephine. Finally, David incorporates a sculpture of *La Pietà* behind the altar, which oversees *everything*, a potent portrayal of the church as mother figure. Josephine reinstates the role the former queens of France once played, while her husband does the same for patriarchal authority. "David's painting of Josephine confers on the aging widow, grandmother, and newlywed the apparent capacity to breed successfully."¹⁴⁸

Josephine can also be connected to literary, historical and art historical examples of the Roman matron. The role of the matron in Republican Rome was twofold: the matron was granted immense responsibility throughout the household, while serving legal roles such as being witnesses in court cases. On the other hand, she also served in a

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 157

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 159

subordinate role to her husband, who had complete legal and personal power over her. “...the Roman matron was at once honored and subordinated; she was thoroughly respected and yet granted almost no legal rights.”¹⁴⁹ The matron was independent, and yet entirely dependent on another person. Furthermore, “...women were to serve as dutiful daughters, faithful wives, devoted mothers, or, like Cornelia, Agrippina, and Porcia, stoic widows who were extolled as paradigms of virtue and domesticity.”¹⁵⁰ Beyond these roles, the matron was often lauded for such qualities as wisdom, intelligence, and interest in the arts. Some matrons were property owners, such as Cornelia and Livia.¹⁵¹ A select few, the example being Agrippina, assumed a military role; Agrippina was responsible for successfully suppressing numerous attempted mutinies during her husband’s Germanic campaign, and most famously celebrated in a painting by the American-born artist Benjamin West, an artist with whom David was familiar.¹⁵² In these respects, Josephine symbolizes the matron, while at the same time revolutionizing it. Josephine was sophisticated, intelligent, well versed in matters such as the arts, and extremely wealthy. Josephine was also involved in the military for most of her adult life. However, unlike her Roman predecessors, she was an incredibly independent and influential figure, not just personally with Napoleon, but publicly as well. She acquired a position of importance far beyond that of the previous female rulers of France. The empress’s function as Roman Matron in *Le Sacre* is fitting, as this image

¹⁴⁹ Helen E. Wieand “The Position of Women in the Late Roman Republic, Part I” *The Classical Journal* 12 (6) (1917) 382

¹⁵⁰ Susan Silberberg-Peirce, “The Muse Restored: Images of Women in Roman Painting” *Woman’s Art Journal* 14 (2) (1993-4) 28

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 28-9

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, 29

is meant to convey traditional, and at the same time, revolutionary, ideas. At first glance, Josephine is portrayed as the quintessential wife; she is a mother, head of her house, and subordinate to her husband. However, deeper consideration reveals how truly important she was, and that, while she may have occupied the role as the mother, she did so with an unparalleled independence.

Although the image is crowded with individuals, David manages to isolate Napoleon and Josephine to the extent that it feels to the viewer as if they are the only two people inside of Notre Dame. Such an interpretation reveals a husband and wife, and thus *Le Sacre* can also be considered a public display of a man's love for his wife. He does not desire to place her as a subject, but instead designates her as an equal in the image. There is no doubt that Napoleon loved Josephine; this is evidenced in the countless letters he wrote to her, particularly during the Egyptian campaign. Even after Josephine's failure to produce a male heir and their subsequent divorce, Napoleon maintained a relationship with Josephine in which she served in an advisory. While it is true that *Le Sacre* is an expression of Napoleon's unprecedented variations of power, David's painting is also a permanent display of his affection towards the woman he loved and admired. While David's constructs the image so that it appears to the viewer that he or she is allowed to occupy a space beside Napoleon, it also sets Napoleon and Josephine apart from the rest of the image, enabling further emphasis on Napoleon and Josephine. Furthermore, David, at Napoleon's request, prominently displays Letizia Bonaparte, Napoleon's mother, which also perpetuates the idea of Napoleon's familial ties. Napoleon's

requirement that David painted his mother into the image, despite her not being present at the ceremony, bolsters this argument. It is clear that Napoleon relied heavily on his family throughout the years of his reign, appointing several siblings and relatives to important posts in the empire. During the coronation ceremony itself, Napoleon is to have remarked to his brother Joseph, “If only our father could see us now.”¹⁵³ The image can thus be conceived as both a profession of Napoleon’s adulation towards Josephine, as well as his affection for his family, who were present at either the ceremony, or in the case of his mother, in *Le Sacre*.

¹⁵³ J. Holland Rose, *The Life of Napoleon* (London: George Bell and Sons, 1903) 479-80; Cited from Robert B. Asprey, *The Rise and Fall of Napoleon Bonaparte* (New York: Basic Books, 2000) 489

CHAPTER III

CONCLUSION: FROM EMPEROR OF THE CONTINENT TO THE BEGINNINGS OF DOWNFALL, 1805 TO 1812

The military fanaticism of the Napoleonic image

Three days after his coronation with his wife, the Emperor Napoleon Bonaparte distributed the new standards of his *Grande Armée*¹⁵⁴. The ceremony took place outside the entrance of the *École Militaire*, located in the *Champ de Mars*; large porticos were constructed on the façade of the military academy and in front, a platform was placed where Napoleon was to stand, flanked by family and heads of state.¹⁵⁵ The heads of the army, lined in columns, advanced until they stood in front of the emperor. Upon receiving the new standards of the Imperial army, the officers swore an oath of allegiance to Napoleon.¹⁵⁶ Upon distributing the new standards, Napoleon proclaimed to those present the oath:

Soldiers, here are your flags! These Eagles will always be your rallying point; they will be wherever your emperor deems them necessary to defend his throne and his people. You will swear to defend them with your life and to uphold them constantly by your courage on the road to victory. Do you swear?¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁴ Luc de Nanteuil, *Jacques-Louis David* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Incorporated, 1985) 140

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

¹⁵⁷ Simon Lee, *David* (London, England: Phaidon Press Limited, 1999) 263

After Napoleon issued the oath, the army officers lifted their standards towards the emperor, while at the same time the Marshals, on the platform with Napoleon, lifted their batons. Altogether, the men began to shout “We swear!” towards the emperor.¹⁵⁸

David’s image, *The Distribution of the Eagle Standards* (fig. 24), painted from 1808 to 1810, chronicles this event, depicting the moment in time in which the army officers swear the oath of allegiance to their emperor. David’s transformation of Napoleon from a war hero to God like figure is completed with the execution of this image. In *Napoleon Crossing the St. Bernard*, David begins this transformation, portraying Napoleon as a larger than life war hero of the French army, who leads his men to conquer Northern Italy. David equates Napoleon to Charlemagne and Hannibal, as well as posits the idea that Napoleon will surpass both these men in the annals of history. *St. Bernard* is a statement on Napoleon’s future; even though, at the time *St. Bernard* was commissioned, Napoleon was already First Consul of France, he was destined for even greater glory. The positioning of Napoleon is both literal and metaphorical in *St. Bernard*: gallant on his horse, Napoleon leads his men to future victory, while at the same time creating his own destiny, and leaping forward towards greatness and immortality. David’s *Le Sacre* is the next stage in the gradual apotheosis of the Napoleonic image. Napoleon’s coronation painting is a statement on his now absolute power over France and Europe. However, Napoleon is still restricted by his surroundings, most notably the presence of the Catholic Church. While Napoleon is presented as the absolutist ruler of France, the

¹⁵⁸ Ibid. 267

presence of the Church leaves a permanent reminder that, despite Napoleon's claim to supremacy, there is still a higher sense of power. Ultimately, though, *Le Sacre* presents the attainment of the greatness Napoleon was destined to achieve as presented in *St. Bernard*. The ultimate statement on Napoleonic power, however, is conveyed to its fullest extent in *Distribution*. Napoleon is portrayed as a God-like figure, dominating the scene, and without the presence of institutions such as the Church, Napoleon's power is completely supreme. By the time of completion of *Distribution*, Napoleon has reached the pinnacle of his career, being both military and administrative leader of France, as well as master of the European continent.

To exemplify Napoleon's unquestioned and legitimate claim to power, David adorns the emperor in his coronation gown, a permanent reminder that, three days earlier, Napoleon was anointed absolute ruler of France, before God and the French government.¹⁵⁹ David creates an image that, despite both his and Napoleon's attempts to portray actual events, has scant traces of realism. "Majesty overshadows life. The figures from the Court have taken on a new gravity...the emperor dominates the crowd with his imperial attitude"¹⁶⁰ Napoleon, in all his majesty and splendor, plays the role of the God-figure, flanked by his subordinates. "...David bathed the entire image in a golden light, which suggests the symbolical realm of the visionary rather than the world of nature. He emphasizes gold throughout the composition, from the details and highlights of costumes and architecture

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

to the prominent gold eagles of the new standards.”¹⁶¹ Those who stand with Napoleon almost take on the presence of angels, carrying out the message of God, and in the same manner that, according to Christian text, angels occupy a place in Heaven, so to do Napoleon’s immediate deputies of state and his family occupy a space on the platform. There is a divide between the two sets of groups, which is formed by the Marshals, the result of which is a disunion between those who occupy the platform and those who stand in front of it.¹⁶² This further emphasizes the idea of Napoleon as a God, as it establishes a loose distinction between those select few who occupy the platform and the officers, those who strive to seek a distinguished place next to Napoleon. The actions of the officers also serve to convey the message of a God-like Napoleon, who nearly topples over one another to reach Napoleon. Those who receive the standards and pledge their allegiance to Napoleon seem to play the role of crazed religious fanatics more so than orderly men who represent the army of France.

That this image does succeed in, however, is the elimination of debate over who the focus is; David’s coronation image centralizes itself on Josephine, and the interpretation behind the painting is complicated. While the coronation was pointed towards glorifying Napoleon, in *Le Sacre*, David chooses to chronicle Napoleon’s wife as the protagonist of the image. However, in *Distribution*, there is no question that it is a statement on Napoleon’s absolute authority and military domination. This image does much more to characterize Napoleon than David’s previous two images, particularly *Le Sacre*, which is

¹⁶¹ Dorothy Johnson, ed., *Jacques-Louis David: New Perspectives* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2006) 140

¹⁶² Ibid.

meant to reveal Napoleon's absolute power but instead glorifies Josephine. Napoleon had risen through the political ranks through effective use of the military, and for him, the civil government was an illusion used to mask his true legitimacy on power, the French military. The government only existed to give Napoleon a sense of civil validity to France and abroad; Napoleon established bureaucratic institutions and elements of the government that, at first glance, appeared to be democratic, but closer analysis revealed were only in place to serve his autocratic tendencies. What David paints in *Distribution*, therefore, is the true Napoleon. It portrays Napoleon as emperor, and with the military surrounding him in his coronation clothes, it clearly points to how he achieved dominion over France.

Le Sacre is an attempt to further the illusion that the French public would be allowed to participate in affairs of the state. Thus, it hides many of the symbols that are prominent in *Distribution*, most notably the connection to the Roman Empire. *Le Sacre*, as proclamation of civil authority, attempts to affirm connections to the Roman Republic (or at the very least, cover up connections to the Roman Empire). *Distribution* does the exact opposite: instead of trying to conceal the links to the Roman Empire, it is both embraced and exclaimed. The most prominent example in the painting is the Eagle Standards themselves. The new standards of the *Grande Armée* were sculpted to represent the insignia of the eagle, a reference to the Legions of Rome.¹⁶³ The Roman legions were the military symbol of Rome's quest for territorial domination, as well as

¹⁶³ de Nanteuil, 140

absolute authority of the emperors. Much like the French government under Napoleon, the Roman Republic under the period of empire was an illusion; real power rested in the hands of the emperor. The attachment with the Roman Empire is only further emphasized by the actions of the officers themselves. Those who came to rule Rome during its years as an empire did so with an army that owed its loyalty to the emperor, not the government. During the age of the Roman Republic, the army served the needs of the senate, which was the real seat of power. However, as Rome shifted from republic into empire, the Roman armies aligned themselves with their generals, not their government. Those who could exercise the most military prowess tended to seize control of the state. Napoleon, through the use of a loyal military force, much like during the Roman Empire, was able to seize political power, and dismantle the Revolutionary government. The soldiers' acceptance of the oath demonstrate this level of devotion to their leader. The needs of the people are secondary to the personal purpose the army serves for Napoleon, because, as of three days prior to this event, Napoleon became *the* government. Thus, while the image is proclaimed as one of deep patriotism and spirit, it is ultimately a declaration of Napoleon's supreme, God-like, powers.

For the execution of the image, Napoleon did oversee the completion of the painting, and demanded that David make two major compositional changes. Originally, the work was to have a figure in the sky, who represented the allegory of victory, distributing laurel wreaths to the men below.¹⁶⁴ Napoleon's immediate reasoning behind the

¹⁶⁴ de Nanteuil, 140

removed of the winged figure of victory was the fact that Napoleon commissioned images such as *Distribution* to be used as a visual history, and thus such a figure would have removed the painting from the realm of reality.¹⁶⁵ Furthermore, Napoleon, not wanting a rival in the image, demanded that David remove the figure from the painting, because, “In 1808, Napoleon wanted images produced that would consolidate ideas of Imperial power and celebrate him as omnipotent leader of the great French armies.”¹⁶⁶ The result is that the soldiers who look into the sky see nothing, and appear to be staring blindly into space.¹⁶⁷ The second change resulted from Napoleon’s personal affairs. David had painted the Empress Josephine as seated behind her husband, and next to her were her two children, Hortense and Eugène. However, their divorce in 1809 prompted Napoleon to have his former wife removed from the image.¹⁶⁸ Josephine’s failure to produce a male heir caused Napoleon to seek another marriage, this time, in an attempt to secure an alliance he wed Marie Louise of Austria. In place of Josephine David did little; he extended the leg of Eugène in order to attempt to fill the void, but this failed and created a sense of awkwardness to the image.¹⁶⁹ The result of these changes created an unbalanced painting that adjusts to the demands of the patron, but greatly disrupts the continuity of the image. The execution of these changes, as well as the overall interpretation of the image, produced severe critiques from the public, one of which was particularly damning:

¹⁶⁵ Johnson, 140

¹⁶⁶ Dorothy Johnson, *Jacques-Louis David: Art in Metamorphosis* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993) 206

¹⁶⁷ Lee, 267

¹⁶⁸ de Nanteuil, 140

¹⁶⁹ Lee, 267

In considering with some attention the element of drawing, this element that is usually so perfect in David's paintings, one is completely astonished to see a throng of mistakes amid great beauty. Here the viceroy of Italy in military costume is in such an equivocal pose no one can define it. Some believe he is seated, others believe he is only leaning on the sword. Whatever way he was supposed to be represented, it is only too clear that this pose is constrained and that he is poorly drawn. There, at the top of the stairs he has just climbed, we see a young hussar, running on the balls of his feet and raising a leg nimbly behind him, as if, in the difficult direction from lower to higher, he had the same freedom of action as in a race in the open country. Further down, and in the foreground, well in front of the principal group, a sapeur, who looks like he is mounting an assault, stretches out a huge arm to the right, the extremity of which is hidden behind other figures at least five feet away from him.¹⁷⁰

The painting was severely criticized largely because of its "seditious and politically subversive" overtones.¹⁷¹ The *Journal de l'Empire*, the official voice of the government, attempted to refute these claims with the following assessment:

Several critics claimed that the Marshals should be at the head of the troops, like them their faces turned towards the Emperor who receives their oaths. They do not think that enthusiasm can *serve* as an excuse for disorder, for a disarray that is contrary to military discipline, even in a painting. The action, they say, is equivocal, there is nothing to keep us from understanding it as a seditious movement that the monarch and his generals are attempting to quell. The movement and the expression of all the figures evince as well that this has to do with an oath taken with joy and nothing to do with seditious rage.¹⁷²

The preceding statement attempts to dispel the negative claims of the image by asserting that the soldiers who took the oath did so willingly and enthusiastically; the image is a proclamation, as the statement suggests, of the army's unyielding loyalty for its leader.

¹⁷⁰ *Journal de Paris* (November 12, 1810); Cited from Dorothy Johnson, *Jacques-Louis David: Art in Metamorphosis* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993) 213-4

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.* 208

¹⁷² *Journal de l'Empire, Salon de 1810, December 3, 1810*; Cited from Dorothy Johnson, *Jacques-Louis David: Art in Metamorphosis* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993) 208

The image does, however, display the conflicting emotions over the conduct of the Napoleonic government. Within the image there is a young man who has in his possession a flag bearing the words *La République*¹⁷³. The nature under which this man and the symbol of the former French Republic he carries suggest that, while some of the virtues of the Revolution may remain, the new government under Napoleon cares little for the values of the former Revolution, particularly equality, justice, and democracy. However, despite the overt references to symbols such as the Roman Empire, and Napoleon's absolutist hold on power, the spirit and essence of the Revolution will persevere.¹⁷⁴ The clash between the display of the standards of the Revolution and the new, Imperial, standards, are best characterized in the following text:

The relinquished flags are unique and individual, each is inscribed with the name of a battle that distinguished a regiment while the new flags are virtually uniform. The uniformity of the new flags conveys the power of centralized control, the new bureaucracy that Napoleon established....Thus, the former flags that stand erect behind the court, yet seem to preside nevertheless over the new Imperial standards, communicate a distinctive narrative in themselves, a narrative that is concerned with Napoleon's assumption of political power based on his military capability and his qualities as leader of a great army.¹⁷⁵

The presence of the former standards of the Republic is theorized to be a subversive message by David that the Republic would, eventually, return to power. The soldier does not salute the emperor, nor does he even face him, but instead he flees from the scene.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷³ Johnson, *New Perspectives*, 139

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

¹⁷⁵ Johnson, *Art in Metamorphosis*, 215

¹⁷⁶ Ibid. 216

In this regard, the soldier, a young male, is the symbol of the effort to restore the Revolution from the autocratic regime of Napoleon. The irony behind David's message, however, is the fact that the young soldier is surrounded by an army who is both entranced and fanatically loyal to their leader. It would appear that, if the Revolution was to emerge from the grip of Napoleon, the chances would be narrow. The contrast between the young man and the older soldiers suggest the idea that those who serve in Napoleon's army are far more experienced to deal with the possible confrontation against the Revolutionaries than their potential opponents are against the *Grande Armée*.

The final execution of the image greatly frustrated David, who had no desire to make the changes to his work, placed upon him by Napoleon. The outcome was that David was forced to produce that image that damaged his reputation as an artist that was praised for his workmanship and closeness to detail. The image is awkward in many aspects, such as the presentation of Josephine's son, Eugène, and the removal of the winged allegory of victory. It can be suggested that David's apparent lack of effort to fix the painting was an act of defiance against Napoleon. For example, those who gaze into the sky in the initial construction continue to do so in the final product. One can almost see David's frustration at Napoleon when viewing *Distribution*, the last image David would produce for the emperor. His rejection to more fully make corrections to the painting no doubt reflect David's estranging relationship to the emperor, as it would appear he aimed to complete the painting as quickly as possible.

A portrayal of Napoleon the statesman

1805 marked one of Napoleon's greatest periods as a battlefield commander. His first major opponent was Austria, whom was preparing for war against France.¹⁷⁷ Napoleon, in order to cut off Austria from potential assistance, negotiated a secret treaty with Prussia that, in return for Hanover, Prussia would declare neutrality in the conflict. Napoleon also forced the states of Bavaria, Baden and Württemberg, and the Landgrave of Hesse-Darmstadt to become his ally, reinforcing his army with soldiers and permission to cross through their lands. Napoleon, free from diplomatic pressures, issued orders to his *Grande Armée* to move from the French coast off the English Channel to the Rhine River, a total of 176,000 units.¹⁷⁸ The first major campaign, Ulm, was won before the battle was even fought; the French had gained control of the Austrian line of communication, as well as completely surrounding the Austrian right flank.¹⁷⁹ It was speed, more than anything else that had been the key factor; the quickness of the *Grande Armée* caught the Austrians by complete surprise. General Freiherr Mack von Leiberich (1752-1828), in control of the Austrian forces, was forced into the small town of Ulm; Napoleon, learning that the Russians were currently marching to abet their Austrian allies, decided to act quickly. In a decisive battle, Napoleon's forces surrounded Mack from all sides, forcing a disorderly retreat; Mack was captured on the 18th of October with nearly 8000 soldiers, and officially surrendered two days later. Napoleon's losses of

¹⁷⁷ General Sir James Marshall-Cornwall, *Napoleon as Military Commander* (London, England: Penguin Books, 1967) 129

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 130

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 134

1500 casualties were insignificant compared to the Austrians, who had surrendered all forces, which included 16 generals, 33,000 officers, and 60 guns. A little over a month later, on November 14th, 1805, Napoleon occupied the Austrian capital of Vienna, accomplishing the goal he set out to do at the start of the Ulm Campaign.¹⁸⁰

On the one year anniversary of his coronation, Napoleon won his greatest victory at the Battle of Austerlitz. With nearly 20,000 men less than his allied opponents of Russia and Austria, Napoleon managed a stunning victory. General Mikhail Kutuzov of Russia (1745-1813), the commander of the allied forces, conducted a serious error in the course of the battle. Overlooking the field from the strongest position, the Pratzen plateau, he abandoned this strategic site in favor of advancing on the French. Napoleon, recognizing the severity of Kutuzov's blunder, ordered Marshal Jean de-Dieu Soult's (1769-1851) forces up the plateau; Soult seized the position easily, thus splitting the allied forces in half.¹⁸¹ Communication between the allies quickly broke down, and Napoleon, realizing his moment to deliver the final blow had arrived, ordered a general advance of his men. Attacked from all sides, the allies quickly retreated. The next morning, Emperor Francis I of Austria (1768-1835) requested an armistice, and on the 27th of December the Treaty of Pressburg was signed, ending the Third Coalition.¹⁸² The victory at Austerlitz is best described in the following terms: "He induced his opponents to attack him in a strong defensive position; then, when the enemy committed the cardinal error of abandoning the high ground in the centre, Napoleon seized the opportunity like lightening and

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., 138-140

¹⁸¹ Ibid., 144

¹⁸² J. Christopher Herold, *The Age of Napoleon* (New York: American Heritage Inc., 1991) 175

separated their two wings.”¹⁸³ Of all the spoils of war, perhaps Napoleon’s personal favorite were the several captured enemy standards that day, 45 were sent to the Archbishop of Paris, where they were to be hung on the Cathedral of Notre Dame for public display.¹⁸⁴ Napoleon planned Austerlitz down to every detail, choosing the site of battle, and even meeting with the Russian emissary, in which he acted as if he was confused and feared the possible confrontation against Russia and its Austrian ally. Alexander, reflecting on Napoleon’s victory at Austerlitz, made the following comment: “...he [Napoleon] is a man predestined by Heaven...it will require a hundred years for my army to equal his.”¹⁸⁵

Napoleon spent the next several months after the victory at Austerlitz reorganizing his army, as well as attempting to keep Prussia in its state of neutrality. However, the Prussians declared war against France on August 9, 1805, after the government learned of Napoleon’s negotiations to return Hanover to England, which belonged under Prussian control.¹⁸⁶ On October 7, the King of Prussia, Friedrich Wilhelm III (1770-1840) delivered an ultimatum to Napoleon, demanding that his *Grande Armée* leave the Germanic territories.¹⁸⁷ Napoleon had no intentions of adhering to the ultimatum, and instead marched against the Prussian army, coming into conflict with them outside the city of Jena on October 14, 1806. Napoleon dispatched the Prussians with ease, forcing them into a massed retreat from the battlefield. However, Napoleon was under the

¹⁸³ Marshall-Cornwall, 145

¹⁸⁴ Robert Asprey, *The Rise and Fall of Napoleon Bonaparte* (New York: Basic Books, 2000) 545

¹⁸⁵ Frank McLynn, *Napoleon: A Biography* (New York: Arcade Publishing, 1997) 345

¹⁸⁶ Marshall-Cornwall, 148

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 156

impression he had defeated the entire army, when actually he had only encountered a small portion. The main Prussian body, under the Duke of Brunswick (1735-1806) and Wilhelm, was still on the march. The same day as the Battle of Jena, the Prussians, near the city of Auerstädt, assaulted the advance guard of Marshal Louis-Nicolas Davout's (1770-1823) III Corps. During the engagement, Brunswick was killed with a musket ball to the head, leaving the Prussian army momentarily without a leader until the arrival of Wilhelm.¹⁸⁸ However, there was already mass confusion throughout the ranks, exacerbated by Wilhelm's order for a full retreat; these forces were joined up with those Prussians still retreating from Jena. Wilhelm's forces were pursued by the French cavalry under Murat, and, "...the pursuit that followed...was so devastating that one would have to go back to the days of the Mongols to find its equivalent."¹⁸⁹ The victories at both Jena and Auerstädt crippled the Prussians; a total of 25,000 prisoners, along with 200 guns and 60 standards were captured.¹⁹⁰

Napoleon, instead of pausing to rest, continued to march his *Grande Armée*, largely in an attempt to hunt down the fleeing Prussians. During this time, Napoleon issued the Berlin Decree of 1806, which declared a total blockade of Great Britain. The British responded with an Order in Council, which gave the Royal Navy the right to capture any neutral vessel going to or leaving a French port.¹⁹¹ The matter with Great Britain only continued to frustrate Napoleon, and attempting to eliminate other foes, turned his attention toward

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., 164

¹⁸⁹ Gregory Fremont-Barnes and Todd Fisher, *The Napoleonic Wars: The Rise and Fall of an Empire* (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2004) 70

¹⁹⁰ Marshall-Cornwall, 165

¹⁹¹ Ibid., 168

Russia, as he intended to separate Poland from Russian dominion. On February 8, 1807, the Napoleon's army confronted the Russian army outside Preussisch-Eylau, and a massive battle ensued. The city, held by a contingent of French forces under General Pierre Augereau (1757-1816), was captured by the Russians after the French attempted to advance from the city but lost direction in a severe blizzard. Immediately after the Russians gained control of the city, Napoleon ordered a section of the Imperial Guard into the city, which drove the Russians out. This trading of the city from one army to the other continued for some time, until some French forces under Davout outflanked the Russians. The Russian army retreated to Königsberg, losing 18,000 men out of their original force of 73,000. The French, completely exhausted, lost 15,000 of out 80,000. Napoleon, in typical fashion, pursued the Russians instead of pausing to rest, seeing an opportunity to confront the Russians again outside the city of Friedland, 15 miles east of Eylau. On June 14, 1807, the two armies once again fought against each other. An attack on the Russian right flank, followed by an advance in the center, pushed the Russians out of Friedland. The next day, the Russians retreated to Tilsit, with a loss of 10,000 men and 80 guns from the battle the day before.¹⁹² On June 25, 1807, Napoleon met with Czar Alexander I (1777-1825) to negotiate a peace settlement. Several days later, on July 7, the Treaty of Tilsit was signed. The King of Prussia, who was present at the negotiations for Tilsit, was forced to wait on the shoreline, while Alexander and Napoleon conducted peace talks secretly inside a raft in the middle of the river.¹⁹³ According to its terms, the Grand Duchy of Warsaw was established as a buffer between

¹⁹² Ibid., 178

¹⁹³ Herold, 186

Prussia and Russia. Also, all the territory west of the Elbe River previously controlled by Prussia was deemed under the jurisdiction of the newly created Kingdom of Westphalia. Finally, Russia became an ally in France's efforts to blockade British commerce. Finally, Alexander secretly promised to make no objections should Napoleon intervene in Spain and Portugal.¹⁹⁴ Napoleon, now having beaten his opponents once more, was truly master of the continent.

After Tilsit, Napoleon next move was to conquer the entire Iberian Peninsula; only then, Napoleon reasoned, would the blockade against Great Britain be fully effective, as both Spain and Portugal were known for supporting the British. On October 22, 1807, Napoleon declared war on Portugal, and on the 31st issued orders to his forces in southern France to march through Spain and occupy Lisbon.¹⁹⁵ Napoleon used the veil of the Portugal invasion for his true purpose of occupying Spain. Napoleon had longed viewed the Spanish monarch as incompetent and unable to rule the country, and now saw his chance to personally seize control of the country. On November 30, the French army, given the title of the Army of Portugal, arrived in Lisbon, seizing control of the capital city. While Napoleon was taking control of Portugal, he next turned to the formation of the Army of Spain. The creation of a force of 30,000 was formed at Bayonne and instructed to march on Cadiz; this unit was the advance guard for the full

¹⁹⁴McLynn, 378-9

¹⁹⁵Marshall-Cornwall, 182

Army of Spain.¹⁹⁶ On February 20, 1808, Murat was appointed Napoleon's deputy commander of all French forces in Spain, and after a rebellion broke out in March, Murat captured the city of Madrid. During the March Rebellion, the Spanish king, Carlos IV, was forced to abdicate in favor of his son, Ferdinand. Napoleon, despite his dislike of the Spanish monarchy in general, favored Carlos over his son. Napoleon forced Ferdinand to give the crown back to his father, and then Napoleon forced Carlos to abdicate a second time in favor of Napoleon's brother, Joseph Bonaparte (1768-1844). On June 6, 1808, Joseph was declared King of Spain, and by the end of July occupied Madrid.¹⁹⁷ Massive rebellion throughout the country broke out, which gained even more energy due to Joseph's incompetent leadership. The forced abdication of Ferdinand in favor of his father, then to have Carlos abdicate once more in favor of Joseph Bonaparte greatly damaged Spanish pride. This humiliation spurred a country wide revolt against the French that would be a serious thorn in Napoleon's side for the next five years.¹⁹⁸ The occupation of Spain signaled the beginnings of the destruction of the Napoleonic Empire, as Napoleon would soon be forced once more into conflict with Austria, creating a two front war.

Napoleon, now dealing with two fronts, viewed the Austrians as his most threatening problem. Returning to Paris from Spain, Napoleon quickly met with Czar Alexander at Erfurt, in which Alexander pledged to not participate in hostilities should armed conflict break out between France and Austria. With Alexander's pledge at the Erfurt

¹⁹⁶ Ibid., 182-3

¹⁹⁷ Ibid., 184-5

¹⁹⁸ McLynn, 395

Convention, Napoleon would only have to deal with Francis in the east, and was reassured that, should Austria make a move, his forces stationed there would be sufficient to effectively defend his empire. Napoleon now shifted units into the western portion of his empire in Spain, and in early November 1808, Napoleon was once again in Spain to personally take command of the French army; on December 4, Madrid surrendered to him, hardly a month after Napoleon reentered the country¹⁹⁹

While Napoleon was attempting to restore order in the Iberian Peninsula, the British forces under Sir John Moore (1761-1809), which arrived in Portugal in early August 1808, had already advanced into Spain, reaching as far as Salamanca on November 13, 1808.²⁰⁰ Napoleon, now in command, focused his attention on the British, shifting his headquarters 115 miles northwest of Madrid. Also, through a series of interrogations, the emperor learned that Moore was retreating to Corunna, and sent Marshals Ney and Soult to intercept the British. With the situation now seemingly under control, Napoleon shifted attention back to the east on Austria, who was making the necessary preparations for war. The emperor hastily returned to Paris, leaving his brother Joseph in command of the Army of Spain.²⁰¹ Napoleon's failure to defeat the British, as well as leave, in his absence, an incompetent leader, would prove his undoing, as the French would be thoroughly defeated by Moore, and eventually Sir Arthur Wellesley (1769-1852).

¹⁹⁹ Marshall-Cornwall, 189

²⁰⁰ Ibid., 190

²⁰¹ Ibid., 191

In early April 1809, the Austrian army began its advance against France, passing between Passau and Braunau; a total of 140,000 men marched through this area before Napoleon became aware of the situation.²⁰² On the April 21, 1809, the Archduke Charles (1771-1847) launched an offensive against the French stationed at Eckmühl, but was held at bay by the French artillery. After a French counter offensive, the Austrian forces, the left flank of the entire Austrian army, panicked into a mass retreat. Two days later, on the 23rd, the French under Marshal Jean Lannes (1769-1809) captured the city of Ratisbon.²⁰³ After failed attempts to scale the city walls with ladders, the men refused any more attempts; Lannes, in an attempt to compel his soldiers, proceeded to grab a ladder and proclaim to his men “I was a grenadier before I was a marshal, and I am still one!”²⁰⁴ Lannes then charged towards the city walls, but his attempt was halted when his men, overcome at their leader’s bravery, ran to stop him and protect him. The French forces then proceeded to scale the walls and take the city. While his subordinates were achieving success on their own fronts, Napoleon personally focused on Vienna, capturing the city for the second time on May 13, 1809.²⁰⁵

In late May, the units under Marshal Jean André Massèna (1758-1817) had captured the small town of Aspern-Essling, which was located two miles inland from the Danube River.²⁰⁶ Charles, who expected the arrival of the rest of the French and an attempted river crossing, planned to allow some of the soldiers to cross over, and then when the

²⁰² Ibid., 198

²⁰³ Ibid., 203

²⁰⁴ Fremont-Barnes, 96

²⁰⁵ Marshall-Cornwall, 203

²⁰⁶ Ibid., 207

time was most opportune, destroy the bridges and split the French army. On May 21, the Austrians launched their assault and drove the French out of Aspern. Throughout the course of the battle, the river flooded, damaging the pontoon bridge, making it impossible for the French to reinforce their comrades, who were under a constant barrage of Austrian firepower. The day became even worse for the French: while the army was about to cross the repaired bridge, the Austrians released five barges full of burning wood. The barges smashed into the bridge, destroying it, and killing several French soldiers. Later that day, Napoleon ordered a general retreat. The French suffered 44,000 casualties and the death of Marshal Lannes, one of Napoleon's favorite commanders; Austrian casualties amounted to 23,000, but the loss of soldiers was insignificant compared to the psychological outcome of the battle, which greatly damaged the Napoleonic image of invincibility.²⁰⁷

However, undaunted by the Austrian victory, Napoleon reorganized for a second attempt to cross the river and defeat the Austrians. On July 5, after successfully managing to cross the Danube, Napoleon struck at the Austrian left flank, launching a frontal assault, which was, unfortunately, repulsed with heavy casualties. The fighting continued till dark, when Napoleon decided to stop the assault and continue the next day. The next morning the Austrians launched an offensive on the far left flank of the French, driving them out of Aspern and threatening to cut off the French supply and communication route, as Aspern was located close to the pontoon bridge. Napoleon, instead of sending

²⁰⁷Ibid., 209

reserves to protect his left flank, assaulted the section of the Austrian army located in the town of Wagram. The French launched a massive bombardment, in which the forces under Davout turned the Austrian far left flank and pushed them into Wagram. Late in the afternoon, after learning that the reserve forces under his brother would not arrive, Charles called for a general retreat. The French suffered nearly 30,000 casualties, while the Austrian number was estimated at 26,000. Five days after the Battle of Wagram, Francis requested an armistice. The Treaty of Schönbrunn was signed months later, on October 14, 1809.²⁰⁸ The terms of the treaty stipulated that Austria was to give up the territories of Carinthia, Carniola, and most of Croatia. Bavaria was granted the territory of Salzburg, and the Grand Duchy of Warsaw obtained northern Galicia, Cracow, and Lublin. Austria was also forced to pay a war indemnity of 85 million francs to support the Continental System, and to restrict its army to a size of 150,000. Finally, Austria was to recognize Joseph Bonaparte as the legitimate King of Spain.²⁰⁹ Napoleon had, for the second time, crushed the Austrians, forcing a humiliating peace.

During the second Austrian campaign in 1809, an attempt was made on Napoleon's life by student named Frederick Staps.²¹⁰ The emperor felt, more now than ever, that it was necessary to secure a legitimate heir to his throne. Thus, on December 15, 1809, Napoleon official divorced Josephine, and began to seek a new bride. Napoleon's efforts ended up with either a member from the Romanov or Hapsburg family, but Alexander refused to allow Napoleon to wed into his family, and thus the emperor turned to the

²⁰⁸ Ibid., 214-5

²⁰⁹ McLynn, 423

²¹⁰ Ibid., 423

Austrian royal family. On April 2, 1810, Napoleon married an Austrian princess, the Archduchess Marie Louise (1791-1847). The Archduchess despised Napoleon, but the Austrians were weak and needed to appease Napoleon, rather than risk further destruction. In short, “Marie Louise was chosen as the sacrificial virgin to placate the ogre.”²¹¹ On March 20, 1811, Napoleon’s new wife gave birth to a son, who was given the title King of Rome. It is here, at the end of 1811, when Napoleon’s empire reached its fullest extent, but was beginning to contain fissures within, that David painted his final portrait of Napoleon.

David’s *Napoleon in His Study* (fig. 25), completed in 1812, and was, in fact, not commissioned by Napoleon but instead by an Englishman, Lord Douglas (1767-1852).²¹² Douglas was a fanatic of Napoleon, and while at first glance it would appear odd that an Englishman would admire someone who was his nation’s enemy, closer observation reveals that Douglas descended from a Scottish lineage, a nation that was once close allies with France.²¹³ The image, though not commissioned by Napoleon himself, is essential in understanding the visual history of the Napoleonic Empire as it comes to a close, as it appears that David’s painting is an attempt to stray away from the Napoleonic image as a deity, and instead present him as a man dedicated to his constituents.

²¹¹ Herold, 285

²¹² de Nanteuil, 146

²¹³ Ibid.

Napoleon in His Study rewarded David with the opportunity to reignite his connection to the imperial crown, which he had long sought for.. After his final commission for the emperor, *Distribution*, David had difficulty in discovering where his future lay; at one point, he attempted to restart the Napoleonic commission of painting three coronation portraits, but the administration flatly refused this offer, and David turned to other projects.²¹⁴ Unsure of how to proceed, David returned to the paintings he left unfinished when Napoleon called him into service, particularly *Leonidas at Thermopylae* (fig. 26).²¹⁵ Despite David's turn from imperial art, he still desired to exhibit his artistic repertoire of the Napoleonic image, especially since the new empress, Marie Louise, had chosen Pierre-Paul Prud'hon (1758-1823), a rival of David's, as the new Court painter. Thus, David welcomed the commission by Douglas, which once more gave him the opportunity to execute artistic glory in the subject matter of Napoleon Bonaparte.

The image presents conflicting elements, because while this image is meant to be a portrait of Napoleon when he was First Consul, David depicts Napoleon at his current age, when the painting was commissioned in 1812. Furthermore, because David no longer worked directly for the emperor, he was not restrained by the requirements of the administration, which required the artist to "...transform the individual into an inaccessible hero."²¹⁶ As one scholar notes of David's efforts to once more portray Napoleon, "This weary and distant portrait is the farewell of an absent Emperor to a

²¹⁴ Bordes, 115

²¹⁵ Ibid.

²¹⁶ Johnson ed., *New Perspectives*, 136

painter who is still moved and touched by the imperial image.”²¹⁷ For David, the ability to once again paint an image of Napoleon brought back a certain sense of welcomed nostalgia, and it is evident from the honestly executed in the image that he still greatly admired Napoleon. Gone is the attempt at classicizing the emperor and in its place is a more humanistic and approachable Napoleon. This image is even further contrasted from the other three images by the atmosphere David creates, in which, “The impression given is that we have come stealthily to the palace and been admitted while the rest of the world sleeps...”²¹⁸ This is extremely unique, especially when pitted against the previous paintings, where the emperor is presented as unattainable to the people. Napoleon, given the opportunity to view the portrait, remarked, “You have found me out, my dear David; at night I work for my subjects’ happiness, and by day I work for their glory.”²¹⁹ The proof of this devotion to his people is most evident from Napoleon’s facial features, which reveal that the demands of civil office have begun to weigh heavily on the once vivaciously young conqueror. As Luc de Nanteuil notes, “It is no longer Napoleon the hero David is invoking but, rather, the leader whose burden he wishes to share.”²²⁰ Napoleon would routinely wake up early in the morning to get a head start on the important issues addressing him, and often times would even work through the night; the testament to such a work ethic is revealed through the fatigued expression on his face.

²¹⁷ Ibid.

²¹⁸ Anita Brookner, *Jacques-Louis David* (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1980) 169

²¹⁹ Ibid.

²²⁰ de Nanteuil, 146

Further revelation of Napoleon's attempts at civil affairs is evidenced through the setting of the painting, which is depicted as being in the early hours of morning.²²¹ Furthermore, instead of painting the emperor in his nighttime attire, which David found as inappropriate subject matter, he clothes his protagonist in the traditional uniform of a Colonel of the Grenadiers.²²² The uniform of choice is significant in the evolution of the Napoleonic image. Instead of dressing the emperor in a Marshal's uniform or even civilian attire, David chooses to portray Napoleon as a colonel in the *Grande Armée*, a prominent, but not supreme authority in the hierarchy of the military. This furthers David's efforts to create a more attainable Napoleon, one who still remembers that the origins of his power lay in the military. The uniform imparts the idea as Napoleon being more connected to his soldiers; as a colonel, he would have much more personal contact with the foot soldiers than those higher in command would. In this regard, Napoleon appears to be much more approachable to the ordinary soldier or citizen. However, despite David's subject matter of Napoleon as legislator, the conscientious choice to adorn Napoleon in a military uniform and not a civilian one still reveals where Napoleon's true passions lay. "...he [David] chose to represent him [Napoleon] in his normal daytime attire, the uniform of a Colonel of the Grenadiers, ready to review his troops in the early morning hours..."²²³ It is still evident that Napoleon still focuses heavily on the military, conveyed not just through the uniform but the saber as well, which is ready to be attached back to its owner in a short amount of time.

²²¹ Ibid.

²²² Ibid.

²²³ Ibid.

Ultimately, though, the painting is an homage to Napoleon's commitment to important matters of state. "David retains a personal enthusiasm towards his [painting], setting up around Napoleon a complex, anecdotal situation of self sacrifice and indefatigable concentration."²²⁴ It is his legislative, not military actions, for which Napoleon will be best remembered. Notwithstanding the overt references to Napoleon as a military figure, David's overall message is Napoleon as a lawmaker.²²⁵ David, in a letter to Douglas, explained the reasoning behind his choice of subject matter:

I have represented him [Napoleon] in the most common of moments in his daily life, at work; he is in his cabinet, after a night spent writing the *Code Napoléon*; he notices the light of dawn only because the candles are consumed and about to go out...he gets up from his desk to don his sword and revue the troops.²²⁶

In order to stress Napoleon's venturing into the civil affairs of France, David prominently displays the *Code Napoleon* off to the side of the emperor, while placing Plutarch's *Lives* at the bottom of the desk.²²⁷ Napoleon greatly admired the classical biographer, and once again, much like *St. Bernard*, David equates Napoleon with a great historical figure. David's choice of Plutarch is fitting: in *St. Bernard*, the association with Charlemagne and Hannibal helped to promote the image of Napoleon as a successful military hero, but through the connection to Plutarch, David conveys the idea that Napoleon will become a monumental figure in the annals of history. However, the more prominent display of Napoleon's personal endeavors, primarily the *Code*

²²⁴ Munhall, 6

²²⁵ Bordes, 115

²²⁶ Jacques-Louis David, Letter of May 8, 1812; Cited from Philip Bordes, *Jacques-Louis David: Empire to Exile* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005) 117

²²⁷ Bordes, 117

Napoleon, posits the theory that Napoleon's writings are the next step in the advancement of a modern Europe. David connects both documents through Napoleon; at the bottom are Plutarch's writings, which allows the viewer to connect Napoleon to the immortality of history, while above Plutarch is the *Code Napoleon*, which revolutionized French law up to the present. Napoleon, in between both, acts as the medium through which the progress of history will continue. Thus, Napoleon represents the progression of the future, picking up after the ancients and setting the foundations for the future of civilization.

In the overall significance of the portrait, David's choice of representation of Napoleon working on civil affairs is rather unique in the history of art. In traditional portraiture of leaders, the figure is most often portrayed in a grandiose nature; the idea that a monarch could be praised for his work ethic was unknown, especially in the *ancien régime*, where the upper classes viewed work as an insult. David's image represents the first example of a ruler is praised for his everyday affairs.²²⁸ Napoleon would praise his legislative accomplishments over his military, stating during his exile that "My true glory is not to have won forty battles; Waterloo will erase the memory of all these victories. What nothing will erase, what will live on for all time, is my civil code."²²⁹ It is fitting, then, that at the height of his power, Napoleon is portrayed as a legislator and not a conqueror.

²²⁸ Ibid., 118

²²⁹ Napoleon Bonaparte, *Memoirs*; Reported in *Montholon* 1847, vol. 1, pg 401; Cited from Philip Bordes, *Jacques-Louis David: Empire to Exile* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005) 118

Ultimately, it is evident that David still greatly admires his former patron. Not bound by the demands of the Napoleonic administration, David's portrays France's leader as an individual who sacrifices himself in order to address the problems of the government. Even though the image was not commissioned by Napoleon, David's final portrait of the emperor is critical in the understanding of the progress of the Napoleonic image. Napoleon is a civil administrator whose sole concern is his people; there is no longer an emphasis on Napoleon the war hero as in *St. Bernard*, or the supreme governmental authority as in *Le Sacre* and *Distribution*, but instead the lawmaker.

Conclusion

The analyses of the four images presented were elemental in the formation of the Napoleonic image that has survived up to the present day. The first image, *Napoleon Crossing the St. Bernard*, constructs an aura of Napoleon as a war hero, a man who will become equated to legendary figures such as Hannibal and Charlemagne. *St. Bernard* presents the future emperor of France as a military mastermind, unrivaled by any of his opponents. As the first image, it is significant that it reveals the mode by which Napoleon obtained absolute authority over the French government, and eventually Europe.

Le Sacre is arguably the most iconic of the four paintings. Depicting the coronation ceremony of Napoleon and his wife, Josephine, David's grand scale work projects the

ultimate authority of the Napoleonic government. However, the image does not present the coronation of Napoleon, but instead the crowning of Josephine. The choice to present Josephine over Napoleon proposes the importance of Josephine in her relationship with her husband. Despite this theory, the display of Josephine's coronation is an effort to depoliticize the painting and record a less confrontational history of the coronation.

Unlike *Le Sacre*, the third image, *Distribution of the Eagle Standards*, focuses solely on the authority of Napoleon. *Distribution* represents the culmination of *St. Bernard* and the coronation image, for it represents Napoleon as both the supreme autocrat of both the government and military. Furthermore, the Napoleonic image reaches its most extreme in *Distribution*, as Napoleon is displayed as a God-like figure, uninhibited by any other institutions that would serve to disperse his power (such as the Catholic Church in *Le Sacre*). *Distribution* was the final commission awarded to David by Napoleon, and it is apparent from the lack of effort at correcting the mistakes of Napoleon's requirements that David had grown tiresome of the emperor's megalomania.

The final image, *Napoleon in His Study*, advances a starkly contrasting persona of Napoleon than David's previous works. The emperor, painted as the First Consul, is more concerned with the civil affairs of the government than the military. However, even though the portrait is meant to be of Napoleon when he was First Consul, David chooses to display Napoleon's contemporary age at the time of the image's execution, in 1812. Thus, David portrays Napoleon at a period before he commenced his year's

constant military conquest, but also displays his current age, which acknowledges his mental weariness after years of serving his people and government. *Napoleon in His Study*, the last impression David leaves of Napoleon, states the claim that, despite his military domination of Europe, what will immortalize Napoleon is his legislative accomplishments.

Jacques-Louis David, perhaps more than any other painter, is responsible for the mythos that surrounds the Napoleonic image, as well as his accomplishments, both as the head of the government and military. David's ideals will never be entirely known, whether he truly believed in Napoleon, or was simply an opportunist; however, the fact still remains that David's artistic talents produced four masterpieces that immortalized the epic life of Napoleon Bonaparte.

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APPENDIX
COLLECTION OF IMAGES



Fig. 1
Jacques-Louis David, *Jupiter and Antiope*
1767, oil on canvas, 87x79cm



Fig. 2
Jacques-Louis David, *Madame Buron*
1769, oil on canvas, 66x55cm



Fig. 3
Jacques-Louis David, *Antiochus and Stratonice*
1774, oil on canvas, 120x155cm



Fig. 4
Jacques-Louis David, *Count Potocki*
1781, oil on canvas



Fig. 5
Jacques-Louis David, *Belisarius Asking for Alms*
1781, oil on canvas, 288x312cm



Fig. 6
 Jacques-Louis David, *Saint Roch Interceding with the Virgin for the Recovery of Plague Victims*
 1780, oil on canvas, 260x195cm



Fig. 7
 Jacques-Louis David, *Sketch for Funeral of Patroclus*
 1781, gouache and wash on paper, 32.2 x 75.8 cm, Musée du Louvre, Paris



Fig. 8
 Jacques-Louis David, *The Oath of the Horatii*
 1784, oil on canvas, 326x427cm, Musée du Louvre, Paris



Fig. 9
 Jacques-Louis David, *The Death of Socrates*
 1787, oil on canvas, 129.5 x 196.2 cm, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City



Fig. 10

Jacques-Louis David, *The Lictors Bring Brutus the Bodies of his Sons*
1789, oil on canvas, 323-422 cm, Musée du Louvre, Paris



Fig. 11

Jacques-Louis David, *Oath of the Jeu de Paume (Oath of the Tennis Court)*
1791, oil on canvas, Musée Carnavalet, Paris



Fig. 12

Benjamin West, *The Death of General Wolfe*

1770, oil on canvas, 151x214cm, The National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa



Fig. 13

Jacques-Louis David, *The Death of Marat*

1793, oil on canvas, 165x128cm, Musée d'art ancien, Brussels



Fig. 14

Jacques-Louis David, *View of the Jardin du Luxembourg, Paris*
1794, oil on canvas, 55x65cm, Musée du Louvre, Paris



Fig. 15

Jacques-Louis David, *Sabines*
1799, oil on canvas, 385x522cm, Musée du Louvre, Paris



Fig. 16

Jacques-Louis David, *Napoleon Crossing the St. Bernard Pass*
1801, oil on canvas, 260x221cm, Malmaison, Rueil-Malmaison

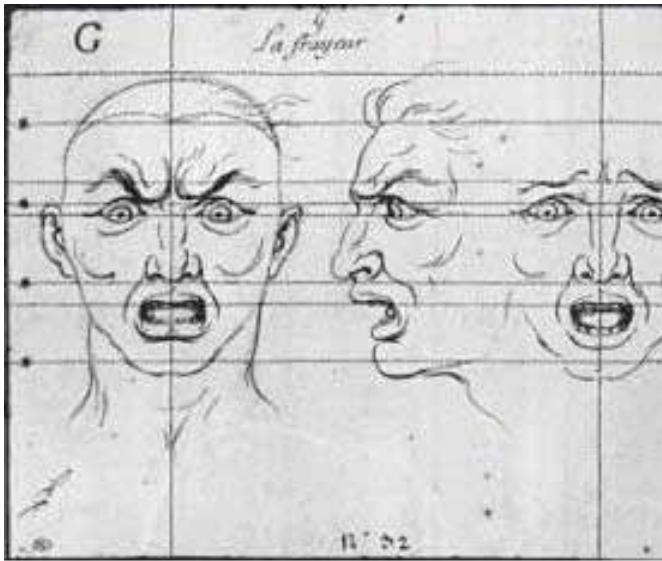


Fig. 17
Charles Le Brun, *La Frayeur (Terror)*



Fig. 18
Equestrian Statue of Marcus Aurelius
161-180 CE, Gilt Bronze, Musei Capitolini, Rome



Fig. 19

Jacques-Louis David, *Le Sacre (The Coronation of Napoleon and Josephine)*
1806-1807, oil on canvas, 621x979cm, Musée du Louvre, Paris



Fig. 20

Jacques-Louis David, *Study for Le Sacre*

c. 1806, pen and crayon on paper, 29-25cm, Musée du Louvre, Paris



Fig. 21

Antoine-Jean Gros, *Napoleon on the Battlefield at Eylau, February 9, 1807*

1808, oil on canvas, 521x784cm, Musée du Louvre, Paris



Fig. 22
Coronation Crown of Charlemagne
c. 800



Fig. 23
Peter Paul Rubens, *Coronation of Marie de Medici at Saint-Denis*
After 1610, oil on canvas, 394x727cm, Musée du Louvre, Paris



Fig. 24

Jacques-Louis David, *Distribution of the Eagle Standards*

1810, oil on canvas, 610 x 970 cm, Chateau de Versailles, Versailles



Fig. 25
Jacques-Louis David, *Napoleon in His Study*
1812, oil on canvas, 203.9 x 125.1 cm, The National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.



Fig. 26

Jacques-Louis David, *Leonidas at Thermopylae*
1814, oil on canvas, 395 x 531 cm, Musée du Louvre, Paris

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